BOOK REVIEW

A LATE MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHICAL APOLOGIA

by DAVID GEFFEN

ספר בחינת הדת לר׳ אליה דלמדיגו מקנדיא. יעקב יהושע רוס.

Sefer Behinat haDat of Elijah del-Medigo. A critical edition, with introduction, notes and commentary by Jacob Joshua Ross. Tel-Aviv: Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies, Tel-Aviv University, 1984. 153 p.

A brief philosophic text of only thirty pages, this work, composed by Elijah del Medigo in Candia on the isle of Crete at the end of 1490, has enjoyed two previous printed editions and a number of manuscript versions during its five hundred year history. The present edition, the most complete and accurate ever, is based upon all the earlier printed versions, later manuscripts, and the only complete early manuscript of the work, housed in the Ambrosiana Library in Italy.[1] Professor Yaakov Ross of the Philosophy Department at Tel-Aviv University has written a detailed introduction with extensive footnotes, placing the work in its historical and philosophic context. To make this edition more usable, he has also divided the text into chapters and added textual annotations. This version is an excellent example of how a more accurate text of a late medieval classic may be developed by intensive study of the manuscript and printed variants.

Dr. David Geffen is Director of Information Services of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel (AACI) and the author of an unpublished doctoral dissertation on del Medigo, *Faith and Reason in Elijah del Medigo's Behinat ha-Dath*, New York: Columbia University, 1970.

1. MS. Ambrosiana – Milano X 130/5 (Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, No. 14587).

Before discussing Professor Ross's new interpretation of this work, we shall review some of the biographical details of del Medigo's life. Born in the city of Candia in 1460, Elijah was a member of the famous del Medigo family, which had lived on the island since the fourteenth century. The first twenty years of his life are virtually unknown; however, there are extent details concerning the intellectual life of Cretan Jewry during this period. As Crete was a crossroads for Jews who were leaving Spain to travel to the Turkish empire, on the one hand, and for itinerant Jewish scholars coming from North Africa and Palestine, on the other, the island was seething with intellectual ferment; there were several individuals among the local population qualified to teach Jewish and secular philosophy, Kabbalah and the sciences. In this atmosphere Elijah del Medigo was educated. Thanks to his inquisitive mind, he acquired a solid background in Jewish philosophy, and an especially strong grounding in Averroistic thought, via the Hebrew versions of the works of this Arab philosopher.

From 1480 to 1490, he lived in Italy, beginning his stay in Venice, where he served as a judge in a philosophical debate. His Venetian sojourns at the beginning and end of the decade were marked by several short works and translations into Latin which he penned for such well-known personalities as Girolamo Donato, Domenico Grimani and Antonio Pizzamano. During this Italian decade, he produced at least three original treatises in Latin on the nature of the universe and four commentaries in Latin on the works of Averroës, and translated eight of Averroës' commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Plato from the Hebrew into Latin. There are also a number of Hebrew manuscripts of his from this period extent in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

Between 1481 and 1486, del Medigo maintained an especially close relationship with Pico della Mirandola. An outstanding thinker and Christian Kabbalist, Pico, while seeking philosophic texts of Averroës and other medieval thinkers, befriended Elijah because he felt that this young Jewish scholar could be of assistance to him, having access as he did to unknown Averroistic texts. Pico also wanted del Medigo to teach him various aspects of medieval thought. Del Medigo prepared original treatises and translations for Pico, and the two held extensive discussions on a variety of philosophic topics.[2] While with Pico in Florence in 1485, del Medigo engaged in disputations concerning the validity of Judaism. There, in the home of the Platonist Marsilio Ficino, del Medigo and another Jew – now shown by David

2. Del Medigo was dependent upon patrons for aid, including Pico. While he was appreciative of this, he was also bothered by what he had to take to subsist. In 1486, he wrote to Pico, "...so that you not consider me a boor, send me a little present, not a great one as you usually do, and I will be as happy with it as I would if the Grand Turk conferred a castle on me" (Paris Latin MS. 6508, fol. 76b).

Ruderman to have been Abraham Farissol[3] – argued against the position of Flavius Mithradites, a convert from Judaism who claimed that the scriptures contained references to Jesus. In addition to his philosophic expertise, Elijah proved an outspoken critic of heretical Jews, whom he was concerned would lead people away from the faith.

After parting ways with Pico in 1486, Elijah spent time in various other Italian cities prior to returning to Venice. By the end of the decade, he had returned to his native city on the island of Crete. There are a number of theories as to why he left Italy. The three most commonly suggested explanations are: 1) that he was excommunicated by Rabbi Judah Minz, chief rabbi of Padua, because of his views on philosophy and Judaism; 2) that his espousal of the Averroistic doctrine of the unity of the intellect caused him to be banished by Bishop Pietro Barozzi of Padua; 3) that he suffered from strained relations with the Italian Jewish community, against the background of his critique of the Kabbalah. In addition, Ross notes that the spread of Pico's syncretistic thinking, which was even accepted by some young Italian Jews, was problematic for del Medigo. Because of all these factors, Ross argues, del Medigo wished to return to Candia, where he could teach and develop his basic understanding of philosophy and Judaism – which Ross identifies with the rational approach of Maimonides – without interference (pp. 23-25).[4] Asked to prepare a work on the relationship of faith and reason by his student, Saul Cohen Ashkenazi, del Medigo wrote what was to be his final work, *Beḥinath ha-Dath* ("An Examination of Faith"). This was completed on December 31, 1490, and he died less than three years later.

II

Beḥinath ha-Dath delineates del Medigo's view that one can study philosophy without endangering one's Jewish beliefs. His arguments on this point are based upon Averroës' theory of double truth, found in his *Fasl al Maqal* ("The Harmony of Faith and Reason"). This doctrine states that philosophy and prophecy-revelation are to be regarded as separate and independent sources of truth, both of which are valid. In this, del Medigo is loyal to the Aristotelian-Averroistic tradition and, in a sense, is perhaps even more rigorously rationalistic and "philosophically" consistent than his master, Maimonides, whose work contains a certain harmonistic-allegoristic tendency. (See pp. 48-54) Del Medigo also presents a study of the principles of faith, with a critique of Albo and Duran's positions (albeit without referring to them by name). He also analyzes the topic of *ta'amei ha-miẓvot* (the rationales for the commandments) and its important role in Judaism.

3. David B. Ruderman, *The World of a Renaissance Jew; the life and thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati, 1981), pp. 52, 56.
4. See also the present reviewer's "Insights into the Life and Thought of Elijah del Medigo," *PAAJR* 41-42 (1975), 69-86.

Another significant facet of this work is its critique of Kabbalah – a movement than renascent among Italian Jewry (pp. 39-43).[5] Del Medigo's was the first systematic, written critique of the Kabbalah, and includes a challenge both to the legitimacy and the authenticity of the Kabbalah, and particularly of its key work, *Sefer ha-Zohar*. His arguments are both historical – that the claim of the *Zohar* to hoary antiquity, to authorship by R. Simeon bar Yohai, is incorrect, as evinced by the absence of citations of Kabbalistic positions in either Talmudic or later rabbinic writings – and theological. He sees the doctrine of the *sefirot* as heretical, denying the unity of God, and criticizes the thurgic interpretation of the *mitẓvot* as magical, stressing that the spiritual world is not subject to influence by human beings, but that rather the opposite is the case.

Beḥinath ha-Dath also offers a stringent criticism of certain aspects of Christianity, which he believes to be anti-rationalistic. These last mentioned sections on Christianity appeared in part in the 1629 Basle edition, but were censored out of the 1833 edition by its editor, Isaac Reggio. These passages have been carefully studied in recent years by Daniel Lasker and by David Ruderman,[6] and now by Professor Ross, who contends that *Beḥinath ha-Dath*, while primarily a defense of the Maimonidean rationalistic approach to Judaism, also deliberately included a polemic against Christianity, in general, and against Pico, in particular, who was trying to proselytize through his syncretistic thought. Del Medigo makes it clear that such doctrines as incarnation, transsubstantiation, the Trinity and original sin are anti-rationalistic. Indeed, this work may have been penned in Crete because of the negative critique it implied of the philosophical and theological approach taken by his former student and patron, Picco della Mirandola, and by other Christians whom he knew in Italy.

Another significant insight in the Ross edition concerns del Medigo's use of the term *mitpalsefim* (literally, "philosophizers"). These people in fact did justice neither to philosophy nor religion. The term may have referred to "pseudo-Maimonideans," who utilized certain allegorical tendencies in Maimonides' interpretation of the *mitẓvot* to justify their own wholesale rejection of their yoke. Del Medigo, by contrast, continued to stress the necessity of the observance of the *miẓvot* (commandments) as part of Judaism's logical structure. More specifically, Ross (following Ruderman[7]) identifies this group with the circle of Pico and Ficino, who developed a synchretistic approach combining Christianity, elements of Judaism (especially Kabbalah) and Hermeticist magic (pp. 35-37). Thus, the various polemical themes contained in the book – against Christianity, Kabbalah, and *mitpalsefim* – ultimately lead towards the controversy with this circle, with which

5. Isaiah Tishby sees this as a most important aspect of this work; see his *Mishnat ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1971) I, 45-46.

6. Daniel Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1977); Ruderman, *op. cit.*

7. Ruderman, pp. 55-56.

he was involved during his years in Italy. Del Medigo made these individuals a particular target of criticism because of their negative effect upon Judaism and his fear that their influence might spread.

Professor Ross' interpretive essay, based upon his reading of this critical version of the text of *Behinath ha-Dath*, now provides an important new approach to this work. What is even more telling is that the thought of Elijah del Medigo, who is not generally considered as being in the first rank of Jewish philosophers, could be such a fascinating source of study. This work by Ross adds a new dimension to the study of the history of ideas in Jewish thought. Hopefully, now that a standard Hebrew text exists, an English translation will be prepared so that students of philosophy in general will be able to make use of this treatise.

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To Mom and Dad all my love! David

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BICENTENNIAL ISSUE

PHILADELPHIA

Jacob Solis and Daniel Solis Merchants in Wilmington, Delaware, 1815–1819

M. DAVID GEFFEN
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

"The Borough has one Rope Walk, 2 Breweries, 12 Public Houses. The Merchant Mills at the Brandywine are at the head of the tide and substantial stone buildings containing 14 Water Wheels and 28 pr. of Burr Stones capable of manufacturing annually 600,000 bushels of grain, vessels carrying 3 or 4,000 bushels can come to and discharge or receive cargoes along side of them. They give employment to 40 Millers — no. of clerks — 100 Coopers and shopmen etc. There is also a large flannel mfgry above the bridge. There are 2 lines of stages, a steam boat and 4 packets run regularly to and from Philadelphia. Also a number of vessels owned by the Brandywine Millers. Also a regular line of stages to and from Georgetown. Another to Easton Maryland, and 3rd to Elkton and 1 to New Castle. In winter the Stages between Baltimore and Philadelphia pass thru this place."[1]

This was the Wilmington to which the Solis brothers, Jacob and Daniel, came in November or December of 1814. They moved to Wilmington from New York state in order that they might be together in business. Although their commercial partnership lasted only a few years, the ads that it produced have become an important source of information, as have their family records in Delaware.

Jacob da Silva Solis was born in London in 1780. He arrived in America in 1803. In 1811 he married Charity Hays, daughter of David Hays, Revolutionary War Patriot, at the family home in Mt. Pleasant, New York, now Pleasantville. E. Nunez Carvalho officiated at the wedding. Jacob's younger brother Daniel was born in London in 1784. In the summer of 1803 he left for America. He stopped in Barbados for four months and arrived in New York in February 1804. Daniel lived there until October 1814, when he married Sarah Norris. Shortly after their marriage, they moved to Wilmington, as did Jacob and Charity and their infant daughter, Benveneda, born in New York State.[2]

The two Solis families rented houses side by side at 22 and 24 Third Street between Market and King Streets in the heart of the city. The first event of note was the birth of a daughter to Charity and Jacob.

[1] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser* (Wilmington), December 3, 1816.

[2] Jacob Solis-Cohen, Jr., "Jacob S. Solis: Traveling Advocate of American Judaism," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LII, p. 311. Malcolm Stern, *Americans of Jewish Descent* (Cincinnati, 1960), pp. 196–197.

The father wrote the following entry in his family book of records: "Wilmington, Delaware, a Daughter was born to me March 16th 1815 Corresponding with the (hebrew) of the 3 VeAdar 5575 her name I call Esther Etten [Etting] after my wife's honored Mother. God Grant her Long Life and make her a Virtuous Woman — Jacob S. Solis."[3] Esther thus became the first Jewish child known to be born in Delaware.

A few months later the initial business venture of the Solis brothers was advertised in the Delaware Gazette & Peninsula Advertiser. On June 2 they offered lottery tickets for sale in the Grand National Lottery; and they announced that this "scheme, perhaps is the most brilliant ever before published in this county and presents more chances for obtaining capital prizes." A complete list of prizes was included in the ad, and at the end, a premium was offered by them for gold and silver coins. The Solis brothers had officially entered the Wilmington commercial scene.[4]

During the summer, the sad news was received that Jacob's and Daniel's mother had died in London. This was recorded in Jacob's family record, as was the joyful announcement of the birth of Daniel's first child, a girl. On that occasion, Jacob wrote "A Daughter was Born unto my Brother Daniel Solis, which I named after my Dear Honored Mother, God rest her Soul, Amen, Benveneda Valentine, her Maiden name. (Elul 19th 5575, corresponding the English of August 25th 1815) Wilmington (Del.)"[5]

Two weeks after this birth, the Solis brothers announced to "Country Storekeepers" that they had opened a Wholesale Dry Goods Store at No. 22 Third St., between King and French, only a block away from their homes. Their main selling point was the goods they offered at "Philadelphia prices." They still had lottery tickets available and assured the interested parties that postal orders accompanied by money would be "promptly attended to."[6]

On December 15, 1815, a new ad appeared: "To Country Storekeepers — J.S. & D. Solis respectfully inform them and others, that they have opened a wholesale Dry Goods Store at No. 22 Third Street, between King & French Sts., Where they keep a constant supply of fresh goods suitable to the season, which they will sell at the Philadelphia prices. It is hardly necessary to say how much time and expense may be saved by giving the preference to this new establishment, instead of

[3] Solis Family Records — Photostat copy in Archives of Jewish Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware, (JHSD).

[4] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, June 29, 1815. Joseph Blau and Salo Baron, ed. *The Jews of the United States 1790–1840, A Documentary History* (New York, 1963), pp. 119–120, 268.

[5] Solis Family Records — Photostat Copy in Archives of JHSD.

[6] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, September 5, 1815.

travelling to and from Philadelphia, particularly when the subscribers will take Delaware and Southern banknotes at par for all new purchases."

The final line of the ad was most important because they added these words: "N.B. No business transacted on seventh day." Jacob and Daniel wanted everyone to know that they were Jews. Hence, they informed the community through the local newspaper. This particular ad appeared on twenty four occasions until March 14, 1816.[7]

Business, however, was not as good as they had anticipated. In the spring of 1816, the store was moved to No. 3 Third St. only one door from Market Street, the main thoroughfare for business and commerce in Wilmington. Now at their new location, Jacob and Daniel put this ad in the paper on May 14: "British and India Dry Goods, for sale wholesale and retail, at J.S. & D. Solis's Dry Goods Store, No. 3, Third street, one door from Market Street — are offered to the public cheap for cash — and all chartered bank notes will be taken at par: for no discount will be charged on any chartered bank notes in the United States which are known to them.

"L. B. Lottery Tickets may be had there, in the Pennsylvania Internal Navigation Lottery, which is now drawing — 40,000 dollars the highest prize — whole tickets, 12 dollars."[8]

Now the last line read, with a printed pointed finger for emphasis: "No business transacted on 7th day, till after sunset."[9] Since business had not been too good, the Solis brothers decided it was essential to open on Saturday, the most important market day, after the Sabbath was over. Religious convictions were important, but the Solis brothers could not afford to lose all the Saturday commerce.

At the same time that this ad was running in the Delaware Gazette another ad of theirs appeared in the American Watchman, the other Wilmington paper. For the first time, a Delaware financial institution was referred to when the Solis brothers indicated that "notes of the Farmer's Bank of the State of Delaware will be taken at par." Even with all the inducements business remained slow, and later in the summer — Jacob and Daniel dissolved their partnership.[10]

Jacob now turned to Philadelphia for business, and he placed an ad in Poulson's American Daily Advertiser on December 4, 1816. He indicated to all Philadelphia merchants that he had set up an auction business in Wilmington for the sale of Dry Goods, Groceries, etc. on the same terms as Philadelphia Auctioneers. Jacob emphasized "the

[7] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, December 19, 26, 28, 1815; Jan. 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30; February 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 29; March 5, 12, 14, 19. Blau and Baron, *op. cit.*, 268.

[8] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, May 14, 1816.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *American Watchman* (Wilmington, Delaware), June 1, 1816.

uprightness of his character" and he mentioned Israel Kinsman, a merchant at 4th and Market in Philadelphia as one who would give Solis a good reference.[11]

Now Jacob had to publicize his new business in Wilmington and the following ad appeared on December 9:

> Notice to Town and Country Store-keepers.
> Worthy of Attention.
> SALES AT AUCTION,
> By Samuel Harker.
>
> On Monday morning, at 10 o'clock at the store of Jacob S. Solis, No. 3. East Third Street, Wilmington, Del. a consignment of various seasonable DRY GOODS,
>
> Fresh from Philadelphia.
>
> All purchases above $50 Sixty days credit for approved endorsed notes. Under that sum, *cash.*
>
> Discount allowed for cash upon purchases that are entitled to credit.
>
> P. S. Arrangements have been made for having a constant supply, and repeated sales, upon the same or similar terms.
>
> N. B. Notice will always be given, in sufficient time, of each sale.
>
> Jacob S. Solis,
> Commission Merchant,
>
> Who still continues his Dry Goods business, as usual, at No. 3, East Third Street, selling cheap for cash.[12]

Jacob was determined to expand his business so the following month he appealed to the Fishermen with this ad:

> ATTENTION ! !
> To Fishermen
>
> One thousand pounds good India Twine suitable for nets, only 30 cents per pound, for sale, by
>
> Jacob S. Solis,
>
> At his Dry Goods Store, No. 3, East Third Street, Wilmington, Del.
>
> N. B. Remember its 37 1–2 cents in Philadelphia per pound.[13]

Jacob was also anxious about the volume of his business because his family was about to increase, and he needed additional funds to support them.

[11] *Poulson American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, Pa.), December 4, 1816. Edwin Wolf, II, and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia From Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia), pp. 252, 253, 356, 455–456.

[12] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, December 9, 1816.

[13] *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Advertiser*, January 8, 1817. Solis-Cohen, Jr. *loc. cit.*

In May of 1817, a third daughter was born to Charity and Jacob. On the occasion of her birth he wrote, "May 17th, 1817, Wilmington (Del.) on the Sabbath the 2 Sivan 5577 was born unto me a Daughter her Name I Call Judith Simiah after my two Sisters of that Their names. May God bless her — and make her a virtuous woman."[14]

During the summer of 1817, the Shearith Israel Congregation in New York was trying to raise money to construct a new synagogue building. At a meeting of the Kahal, the ruling body of the congregation, in August 6, 1817, it was decided to send a circular to other congregations and individuals requesting financial assistance for the congregation for this project. In the minutes of that day, it is noted that a circular was to be sent to "Messrs. Solis's, Wilmington, Del."[15] There is no record of monies received from either Jacob or Daniel for the building project, but they both had been members of the Congregation earlier when they lived in New York.

There are no other ads in the Wilmington papers for Jacob's store. However, there is one other item of note about Jacob in the paper, recording his escape from a near-fatal accident. On January 8, 1819 this item appeared: "A providential escape from death. On Mon. eve the 4th inst. as Jacob S. Solis of the borough of W. Del. was coming down the hill near Cecil Furnace, [Maryland] in a one-horse Dearborne, one of the pins came out of the shaft. It being consequently out of the power of the horse to hold back, the wagon pressed the horses heels; in one instant the horse broke away with the shafts and turned the waggon down a precipice into a bed of rocks, where the fore-wheel was dashed to pieces in a most singular manner, besides other injuries. And Mr. S. at that instant was thrown off the wagon to a considerable distance from the spot, and alighted on his head; there he lay weltering in his blood till the humane Cap. Miller, hearing the great crash of the wagon, came to his assistance and conveyed him to his house, where the wounded gentleman (who is now at home confined to his bed) was attended with great kindness by the family."[16]

At the time of this accident Jacob must have been fairly prosperous, since a one-horse Dearborne carriage could only be afforded by the wealthier class. If Captain Miller had not heard the crash and rushed to Jacob's aid, he might not have survived. This act of kindness was to extend Jacob's life for ten more years.

This close scrape with death was soon over-shadowed by the joy which accompanied the birth of his first son, Solomon, in March. Jacob

[14] Solis Family Records. Photostat in Archives of JHSD. Stern, *loc. cit.*

[15] Minutes Congregation Shearith Israel (New York City), Vol. III, p. 362. Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York* (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 407, 588.

[16] *American Watchman*, January 9, 1819.

had almost recovered, and he wrote in the family record: "Wilmington (Del) March 23, 1819 (the hebrew of Adar the 25th 5579) a Son was Born unto me his name I called Solomon after my honoured Father, living in London.."[17] Following the Sephardic custom Jacob gave his first son the name of his father, who was still alive and residing in England.

From 1816 to 1819, while Jacob was operating the auction and commission business, little is known about Daniel except that he was making and selling quill pens, as well as other small items. Through family contacts both may have gone to Mikveh Israel on occasion, but chose not to affiliate at this juncture with the synagogue. It is known that a second daughter was born to Sarah and Daniel Solis in 1817, and she was named Anna.[18]

Early in 1820, Charity Solis urged Jacob to move their family back to Mt. Pleasant so she could be near her parents, the Hays. He finally consented, and in the summer he and his family returned to the Hays farm. They were resident there until 1826 when they moved to New Orleans. During a visit to Mt. Pleasant in 1829 Jacob died unexpectedly.[19]

Daniel remained in Wilmington until 1830 when he became the *schohet* of Mikveh Israel and moved to Philadelphia. Letters of Daniel and his daughter Benveneda written in Wilmington survive.[20] Suffice it to say, Jacob and Daniel Solis were the second and third Jews to live in Wilmington. Only Abraham Judah who was resident in the city from 1751–1761, preceded them. It is evident through their ads, that during their stay in the city, Jacob and Daniel Solis observed the Sabbath and other aspects of Judaism even though they were the only Jews in Delaware at that period.

[17] Solis Family Records — Photostat in Archives of JHSD. Stern, *loc. cit.*

[18] Stern, *loc. cit.*

[19] Solis-Cohen, Jr., *loc. cit.* Stern, *loc. cit.*

[20] All their letters are to be found in the Nathans Family Papers on deposit in the American Jewish Archives. Blau and Baron, *op. cit.*, pp. 213–214, 298–299. M. David Geffen, "Delaware Jewry: The Formative Years 1872–1889," *Delaware History*, Vol. XVI, pp. 272–273. M. David Geffen, ed. *Jewish Delaware: 1655–1976, History, Sites, Communal Services*, pp. 7–9.

To Mom
and Dad
with all
my love,
David
9/2/75

INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF ELIJAH DEL MEDIGO BASED ON HIS PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED WORKS

BY

DAVID GEFFEN

NEW YORK CITY

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INSIGHTS INTO THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF ELIJAH MEDIGO BASED ON HIS PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED WORKS*

BY DAVID GEFFEN

Elijah del Medigo, also known as אליה מקנדיה and Helias Cretensis,[1] was born in 1460 in Candia on the isle of Crete.[2] The son of Moses Abba del Medigo, he was one in a long line of Cretan del Medigos who had lived on this island since the early fourteenth

* I am indebted to Professors Paul O. Kristeller, Arthur Hyman, Isaac Barzilay, and James Walsh of Columbia University for their assistance and guidance in my study of Elijah del Medigo entitled "Faith and Reason in Elijah del Medigo's *Beḥinat ha-Dat* and the Philosophic Backgrounds of the Work" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1970). It will be referred to in subsequent notes as *EDM*.

1 These are the two most often cited versions of his name in Hebrew and in Latin. The following variations are also found in primary and secondary sources: Elias Cretensis, Elia di Creta, Elia del Medigo, Elia del Medego, Elias Ebreo, Helie Iudeo, Elia del Medico, Helias Hebreus, Elias Hebraeus Cretensis, Elie del Medigo, Elias Cretensis Hebraeus, Helia Cretensis, Helie Hebrei Cretensis, Elias Hebraeus Cretensis, Helias Hebreus Cretenses, אליה אליה קריטינס, בן משה אבא.

2 Umberto Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze* (Florence, 1918), 282–284. The date of Elijah's birth must be derived from the date of his death. His student, Saul Cohen Ashkenazi, in a letter to Don Issac Abravanel, dated 1506, points out that Elijah del Medigo had died thirteen years before, making the date of his death 1493. This statement is found in Saul Cohen, *Sheelot Shaul* (Venice, 1574), 6a. Moses Metz, *Sefer Elim* (Amsterdam, 1629), 43–44, in his genealogy of the del Medigo family, noted that Elijah was about 35 years old at the time of his death. Based on this evidence, Cassuto has concluded that Elijah was born around the year 1460. A different dating of his life is found in Moise Schwab, "La littérature rabbinique et la littérature chrétienne au moyen age: Elie del Medigo et sa famille Pic de la Mirandole," *Annales de philosophie chrétenne*, VI ser., XVI (1878), 357–358, who argued that the dates of Elijah's life are 1460–1497. Heinrich Graetz did the same in *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1873), Vol. 8, 244 esp. n.2. Both Schwab and Graetz base their dating on Josef Shlomo del Medigo's *Maẓref la-Ḥokma* (Warsaw, 1893), 3a, who noted

century but who traced their lineage back to Germanic origins.[3] One of Elijah's most famous ancestors was Shemariah ben Elijah del Medigo, who was known as Shemariah Ikriti, the Cretan. Shemariah moved from Crete to Italy in the fourteenth century, where he was a member of the court of Robert, King of Naples, in the third decade of that century. Aside from translating philosophic works from Hebrew into Latin for the king, Shemariah wrote a Hebrew philosophical commentary on the Bible which he dedicated to the king.[4] Josef Shlomo del Medigo, a great-nephew of Elijah who lived in the seventeenth century, was the most fascinating, illustrious and well-traveled member of this family.[5]

There is very little information about Elijah del Medigo's early formative years in Crete prior to 1480. During the last quarter of the fifteenth century the isle of Crete was a crossroads for Jews who were leaving Spain and traveling to the Turkish empire and Palestine, and for itinerant Jewish scholars coming from North Africa and Palestine.[6] When Constantinople fell in 1453, Crete became a stop-off point for Greek scholars who were making their way to Italy.[7] There was great intellectual ferment in Crete since

that Elijah left Italy after Pico's death in 1494. However, this is impossible because Elijah was in Crete at the end of 1490 when he finished his *Beḥinat ha-Dat*, i.e., "the eighteenth of Tevet 5251" (December 31, 1490).

3 Moritz Steinschneider, "Candia, cenni di storia letteraria," *Mosé*, III (1880), 282–284; cf. Metz, *Sefer Elim*, 43.

4 Steinschneider, "Candia, cenni di storia letteraria," 284–285. Cf. Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Torino, 1963), 654. Cf. Cecil Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1959), 71.

5 Josef Shlomo del Medigo was born in Crete in 1591 and died at Prague in 1655. He studied in Italy at the University of Padua under Galileo and then served as a teacher and rabbi in various Jewish communities in Europe and Asia. He was the author of many books covering a wide variety of subjects from mathematics to the Kabbalah.

6 Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (2nd ed.; Graz, 1956), p. 939. Cecil Roth, *Venice* (Philadelphia, 1930), 299–304.

7 Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East & Latin West* (New York, 1966), 140–147; *Idem*, *Greek Scholars in Venice* (Cambridge, 1962), 47–51, 67–73, 89–93.

resident on the island were a variety of learned men who could give instruction in both Jewish and secular philosophy, the sciences and the Kabbalah. A list of manuscripts owned by a Cretan Jew in the fifteenth century reveals that his library contained in addition to many kabbalistic works, the *Moreh Nebukim* of Maimonides, *Commentary* on a physical treatise of Averroes by Gersonides and the *Ikkarim* of Albo.[8] Hence there is evidence that Elijah must have had access to the Jewish philosophical classics. In 1480, when he wrote his first philosophical treatise in Venice, his new home, he demonstrated a knowledge of major segments of Averroes' system of thought.[9]

The only possible reference to Elijah's youth on the isle of Crete is a citation in a responsum by Joseph Colon, a leading rabbi in Italy in the last half of the fifteenth century.[10] In that responsum Colon describes Elijah del Medigo as "a wonderful student of the Law."[11] Whereas Cassuto has suggested that this reference may be to another Elijah del Medigo, there is a statement in Elijah's Hebrew *Commentary on the de Substantia Orbis* of Averroes which may confirm Colon's citation. In 1485, the date of the *Commentary*, Elijah writes, "I have previously composed several treatises on religious law."[12] These treatises are lost, but his reference to them indicates that he was quite knowledgeable in the field of Jewish law.

8 Umberto Cassuto, *Codices Vaticani Hebraici* (Rome, 1956), 67, n. 49, 157–163, n. 105. Joshua Starr, "Jewish Life in Crete under the Rule of Venice," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XII (1942), 107–109; Georges Vajda, "Un inventaire de bibliothèque juive d'Italie," *Revue des Études Juives*, CXXVI (1967), 481–483. I am indebted to Professor Isaac Barzilay for these references.

9 At the end of his Latin treatise *Question on the Efficiency of the Universe* the date and place of its composition are listed as Venice, 1480. This *Question* was published in John of Jandun, *Super Octo Libros Physicorum* (Venice, 1488), 123b–133b.

10 Joseph Colon was born in 1420 and died in Pavia, Italy in 1480. Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 93, 226, 254, 292. Cf. Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1964), II, 456–458.

11 Joseph Colon, *Responsa* (Sadilkov, 1834), n. 54, 23a.

12 Paris Bibliotheque Nationale, Hebrew MSS, 968, fol. 75a. וכבר חברתי קצת קונטריסי׳ בדינים התוריים.

Hence Joseph Colon would have been justified in his praise of this Elijah del Medigo.

Since Crete was under Venetian rule, citizens of Crete could travel freely in Venetian territories. As a result, in 1480 Elijah was able to reside in Venice. Throughout his ten year stay in Italy from 1480 to 1490, Elijah del Medigo was sought out by Christian scholars because of his knowledge of the Averroist positions on such key philosophical issues as the concept of the universe and the unity of the intellect. Moreover, since these thinkers were aware that some commentaries of Averroes existed only in Hebrew, they turned to knowledgeable Jews, in particular del Medigo, to find out what these works contained. Individuals such as Girolamo Donato, Domenico Grimani, Antonino Pizzamano of Venice and the well-known Pico della Mirandola befriended him and employed him to teach them the doctrines of Averroes or to translate the works of the Arabic philosopher from Hebrew into Latin for their use.[13] With their encouragement and financial assistance, he wrote in Latin three original treatises on the universe in addition to four of his own commentaries on the work of Averroes, and he translated eight commentaries of Averroes into Latin.[14]

This list may not be complete, since his works are still being discovered. In fact, a 1491 manuscript of del Medigo's translation of Averroes' *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, which he prepared for Pico in 1485, was discovered in 1964 by Professor Paul Kristeller in Siena, Italy,[15] Del Medigo's patrons rewarded him handsomely

[13] Elijah del Medigo wrote a treatise for Girolamo Donato in Venice in 1480. He authored translations of several works of Averroes for Domenico Grimani and Antonino Pizzamano in Venice in 1488. Elijah met Pico in Padua in 1481 and he translated and wrote original treatises for him from then until 1486. *EDM* 9, 11–14, 29–31.

[14] See Appendix at the end of this paper.

[15] Paul O. Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his Sources," in *L'opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico nella storia dell 'umanesimo* (Florence, 1965), I, 58, 118–119. Cf. Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, ed. & trans. by E. I. J. Rosenthal (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1966), 7, esp. n.3.

and he used their presents to maintain himself during his decade in Italy. A letter written by del Medigo to Pico in 1486 specifies the financial terms:

> Your worship has written me concerning the price. It has always seemed very strange to me that it should be possible to speak in such terms between us. I am not a man who pursues money. I only desire what my needs require. However, so that you should not consider me a boor, send me a little present, not a great one as you usually do, and I will be as happy with it as I would if the Grand Turk conferred a castle on me. Let us talk no more about it.[16]

Another well-known thinker with whom Elijah del Medigo made contact was Ermolao Barbaro.[17] This Venetian humanist

> "was a careful student of the Greek text of Aristotle and set himself the task of making the true Aristotle known through new translations and commentaries."[18]

Because of his desire to reestablish the original text of Aristotle, Barbaro greatly despised the medieval interpreters of Aristotle. On May 4, 1485, Barbaro sent a letter to del Medigo, who was then in Florence lecturing and translating for Pico,[19] in which he criticizes the contention of del Medigo that the syllogism used in logic has four figures. This epistle was in reply to an earlier letter written by del Medigo announcing his discovery of this new insight in the science of logic.

[16] Paris Latin MSS, 6508, fol. 76b. Cf. Schwab, "La littérature rabbinique ...," 368–369; Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 291 esp. n. 4; Roth, *The Jews in the Renaissance*, 115–116.

[17] Ermolao Barbaro was born in 1450, and he lived in Venice from 1480 to 1493 at which time he died a very young man.

[18] Paul O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), 58.

[19] Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, Orationes, Carmina*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Florence, 1942), I, 87–90. Cf. Arnaldo Ferriguto, *Almoro Barbaro* (*Miscellanea di Storia Veneta*, ser. 3, (XV, 1922), 303–305.

Del Medigo was acquainted with this subject through Averroes' discussion of the four figures of the syllogism in his *Middle Commentary on the Prior Analytics*. Elijah knew from this work that Galen was assumed to be the originator of the additional figure in the syllogism. Whereas Averroes disagreed with the four figure syllogism, del Medigo espoused it. His advocacy of this theory was not unique in the Renaissance since other thinkers such as Peter of Mantua and Jacob Zabarella held this position as well.[20]

Traditional logic defined the syllogism as containing two premises and a conclusion, which were built on three terms. These terms are designated: the minor term because it is found in the minor premise and is the subject of the conclusion; the major term because it is found in the major premise and is the predicate of the conclusion; and the middle term which appears in both premises. Originally, in Aristotelian logic, it was thought that there were only three figures in the syllogism, i.e., three possible arrangements of the three terms in the two premises. In the first figure the middle term was the subject of the major premise and predicate of the minor premise. In the second the middle term was the predicate of both premises, and in the third the middle term was the subject of both premises. However, there was a fourth figure of the syllogism. It was initially discussed in the Middle Ages, but it may have been discovered by Galen in the second century.[21]

Returning to the position of del Medigo, it is clear that in his 1485 letter to Barbaro he pointed out that the middle term is the predicate in the major premise and the subject in the minor premise. Since this figure is the reverse of the first figure, it was known initially in the history of logic as the "indirect first figure." However, as is evident from Barbaro's reply and critique, del Medigo thought that this was a legitimate fourth figure of the syllogism, which indeed it was. For Barbaro who followed the

20 Nicholas Rescher, *Galen and the Syllogism* (Pittsburgh, 1966), 32–33

21 Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (New York, 1934), 81–84; Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (New York, 1957), 187–190; W. Windelband, *History of Ancient Philosophy* (New York, 1956), 249–253.

original text of Aristotle, only three figures of the syllogism were conceivable. He therefore explained to del Medigo that his assumption of a fourth figure was impossible and that his view concerning the syllogism should be corrected.[22]

It is specifically during this period when Barbaro corresponded with del Medigo that the former wrote to Pico his most famous and oft-quoted letter in which he labels medieval philosophers as uncultured and barbarous — not deserving to be read or studied.[23] Hence, it may be suggested that Barbaro was motivated to write to Pico because he considered del Medigo's letter, containing the discussion of the fourth figure of the syllogism, representative of medieval misinterpretation of the position of Aristotle. There is no actual proof that del Medigo was responsible for Barbaro's writing to Pico. We do know, however, that Barbaro criticized del Medigo's theory of logic in his letter to him and that he was aware of del Medigo's relationship with Pico.[24]

Among the historical data found in del Medigo's Hebrew writings still in manuscript is the initial Italian reference to a custom begun in the fourteenth century and still practiced by Jews everywhere today. At the conclusion of his Hebrew version of his commentary on Averroes' *de Substantia Orbis*, written in Bassano in 1485, del Medigo recorded a description of various religious practices of Jews whom he had recently met. He wrote:

ילכו כלם אנשים ונשים וטף אחרי אכל ושתה בראש השנה אל הנחלים ואל

[22] Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae*, *Orationes*, *Carmina*, 88–89; Arnaldo Ferriguto, *Almoro Barbaro*, 295–299. Cf. Rescher, *Galen and the Syllogism*, 13–14, 28–30.

[23] The English translation of Barbaro's letter is in Quentin Breen, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIII (1952), 384–426.

[24] Bohdan Kieszkowski, "Les rapports entre Elie del Medigo et Pic de la Mirandole," *Rinascimento*, LV (1964), 46; Ferriguto, *Almoro Barbaro*, 295–298; Avery Dulles, *Princeps Concordiae* (Cambridge, 1941), 32–33. Barbaro's letter to Pico was sent in April and Pico's reply was sent in June. We do not know the date of del Medigo's letter to Barbaro, but Barbaro's reply was sent in May. Thus all the letters were in circulation during the same period of time.

האגמים לנער בגדיהם מן העוונות... וקצת מחסידכם לא יאכלו הדגים באותם הימים יען כי אכלו עוונות האנשים.

> 'One finds that they all — men, women, and children, after eating and drinking on Rosh Hashanah, go to the rivers and to the lakes to shake their garments free of sins... some of their pious ones, *chasidachem*, do not eat the fish from these waters because they would be eating the iniquities of people.'[25]

This, of course, is a reference to the practice of *tashlich*. Del Medigo had never witnessed *tashlich* before, because it was unheard of in Candia. Lauterbach pointed out in his exhaustive study of this subject that *tashlich* began in Germany in the late fourteenth century. The first reference to it as a *minhag* is in the *Sefer Maharil*, a late 14th century work by Jacob Moellin, the rabbi of Mainz.[26] There are other references to *tashlich* in Germany in the early 15th century, but the description by del Medigo is the first record of it in Italy. In addition the reference to this practice by del Medigo demonstrates the presence of German Jews throughout northern Italy during the last quarter of the fifteenth century.[27]

Further on in this same treatise, del Medigo added sadly: "If one does not follow their ways, they scream at him in opposition,"[28]— the assumption being that those treated in this manner will submit to their dictates. Del Medigo concluded the discussion by noting:

> 'in spite of all this (their practices) they are very weak in regard to many of the important facets (of Judaism) and והכסיל בחשך ילך "the fool walks in darkness" (a rewording of the verse in Ecclesiastes).[29]

25 Paris Hebrew MSS, 968, fol. 74a.

26 Jacob Lauterbach, "Tashlich," *HUCA*, XI (1936), 283–295. He argues that *tashlich* began in Germany because it was an aspect of the practical mysticism of that country.

27 Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), 171–174, 277.

28 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, 74a–74b. ואשר לא יעשה כמעשיהם יצעקו עליו במקבילות.

29 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, fol. 74a–74b. Ecclesiastes 2:14 reads החכם עיניו בראשו והכסיל בחשך הולך.

Del Medigo is referring here to the newly arrived German Jews living in Padua who were driven from their homes throughout the fifteenth century by expulsion and by the fear of being massacred. Consequently, they moved from southern Germany into Northern Italy.[30] Padua, because of its religious institutions and its proximity, became the central city around which they congregated. Many of these individuals were kabbalistically oriented, as well as being extreme pietists. They were in the vanguard of the fight against Jews studying philosophy and applying it to interpret Judaism. Such individuals were, in del Medigo's eyes, intellectually weak, and hence they were like fools walking in the darkness, as this quotation indicates. The struggle between the kabbalah and philosophy was quite prevalent in Italy in the late fifteenth century as he newly arrived German Jews and the philosophically trained Italian Jews confronted each other. Elijah del Medigo was certainly involved in this controversy as can be seen in the description of his opponents.[31]

After ten productive years in Italy, Elijah del Medigo returned to Crete in 1490. Since there is some question as to why he returned, it is necessary to review some of the theories concerning this event. One well-known thesis is that Rabbi Judah Minz, the chief rabbi of Padua and the head of the talmudical academy of that city, excommunicated del Medigo because of his views on philosophy and religion. Minz's chief advisors, kabbalistically oriented Germanic rabbis who despised philosophy, may have influenced his decision to force del Medigo to leave Italy.[32] A second theory is that Bishop Pietro Barozzi of Padua's ban on the public teaching of the unity of the intellect in 1489 may have been used by churchmen

30 Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1967), XI, 275.

31 Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, 618–621; Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1894), IV, 293–296; Cassuto, *Gli Ebrei a Firenze*, 290–293.

32 N. Porges, "Elie Capsali et sa Chronique de Venise," *Revue des Études Juives*, LXXVIII (1924), 21–25. Cf. Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia*, 619–620, 666–667.

to make del Medigo leave Italy.[33] Even though del Medigo did espouse the unity of the intellect, there is little evidence to suggest that he would be forced to leave Italy because of his views. Certainly del Medigo's friends in Venice, especially Domenico Grimani, could have protected him.[34] A third possibility for his return to Crete is based upon del Medigo's own writings, in which he criticized the Kabbalists and the extreme orthodox. He also referred to their tendency of shouting down those who disagreed with them.[35] Therefore, it is possible that this group "shouted" him out of Italy. No excommunication was necessary; they just made it so unpleasant for him that he had to return to Crete.

Elijah del Medigo wrote his best known work, the *Beḥinat ha-Dat* (*Examination of Religion*) in Candia at the end of 1490. His student, Saul Cohen Ashkenazi, informs us in a letter, written in 1567 and printed with the *Beḥinat ha-Dat*, that he had asked del Medigo, on his return to Crete, to write about the relationship between Judaism and philosophy.[36] What resulted from Ashkenazi's request was a treatise similar to what del Medigo had promised to write as far back as 1482. In the early part of that year he had planned to compose a work in which he would discuss those points of agreement between philosophy and the Torah and those points of disagreement.[37] In addition to treating this subject in the *Beḥinat ha-Dat*, del Medigo also included in

33 Edward P. Mahoney, "Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo on Alexander of Aphrodisias: an unnoticed dispute," *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*, XXIII (1968), 270–271; Pietro Ragnisco, *Nicoletto Vernia* (Venice, 1891), 125–133; Giovanni di Napoli, *L'immortalita dell'anima nel rinascimento* (Torino, 1963), 181–188.

34 *EDM*, pp. 29–31, 95–105. Even though Vernia was forced to renounce the Averroistic doctrine of the unity of the intellect, he was not exiled or excommunicated. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that del Medigo was excommunicated because of his similar views even though Barozzi's ban still could have applied to del Medigo.

35 Paris Hebrew MSS, 968, fol. 42a, 77a–b.

36 Elijah del Medigo, *Beḥinat ha-Dat* (Vienna, 1833), 83, 89. The English translation of *Behinat ha-Dat* can be found in *EDM* 388–460.

37 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, fol. 150a.

the work a section on the fundamental principles and a section on the reasons for the commandments, traditional topics of interest in medieval Jewish thought, so it was not unusual that he dealt with them.[38] The most significant part of the work, according to Isaac Tishby, is del Medigo's critique of the Kabbalah, one of the first written critiques of that Jewish mystical movement. Over a hundred years later Josef Shlomo del Medigo, Elijah's great-nephew, felt the need of answering his ancestor and he wrote *Maẓref la-Ḥokma*, refuting Elijah's critique of the Kabbalah. Although well known in Crete and Italy, the *Beḥinat ha-Dat* was not published until 1629 in a collection entitled *Taʿalumot Ḥokma*, and only in 1833 was it issued separately with a commentary by Isaac Samuel Reggio.[39]

Elijah del Medigo died in 1493 following an operation to remove a growth from his cheek. According to Josef Shlomo del Medigo:

> admirable Christians from the elite of the country, as well as heads of the city, attended Elijah's funeral dressed in garments of mourning and weeping bitterly for him.[40]

He had a short but productive life as is evidenced by the translations and original treatises which Elijah authored. These works provide the sources for further study of his life as well as for an analysis of his position on the relationship of philosophy and Judaism.

THE THEORY OF DOUBLE TRUTH IN THE WRITINGS OF ELIJAH DEL MEDIGO

According to most historians of philosophy such as Guttmann, Hubsch, and most recently Merlan and Schweid, Elijah del Medigo espoused the double truth theory in his writings.[41] Before dis-

38 Arthur Hyman, "The Task of Jewish Philosophy," *Judaism*, XI (1962), 202–203; *EDM*, 259–378.

39 J. S. del Medigo, *Taʿalumot ha-Ḥokma* (Basel, 1629), 2a–6b; *idem*, *Maẓref la-Ḥokma*, 3b; Elijah del Medigo, *Beḥinat ha-Dat* (Vienna, 1833), 1–79. Cf. Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1957), I, 47–49.

40 J. S. del Medigo, *Maẓref la-Ḥokma*, 3b.

41 Julius Guttmann, "Elia del Medigos Verhältnis zu Averroes in seinem *Bechinat ha-Dat*," in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams* (New York,

cussing this assertion it is necessary to describe the various ways in which the theory of double truth may be understood. In the first place, the theory of double truth may mean that a person can accept two contradictory statements, one in religion and one in philosophy, at the same time. In the second place, the theory of double truth may be applied to an individual who, in his system of thought, is only explaining the position of Aristotle or any other philosopher but is not expressing his own point of view. In the third place, the theory of double truth can mean that the conclusions of philosophy are only the discoveries of the human mind, while the truths of faith are the products of a supernatural revelation and are thus superior.[42] With these three possible varieties it will be demonstrated that del Medigo did espouse a type of double truth theory.

Before discussing the position of del Medigo on faith and reason, the pesition of Siger of Brabant and John of Jandun

1927), 192–208; Adolph Hubsch, "Elia Delmedigo's: *Bechinat ha-Dath* und Ibn Roschd's *Facl ul-maqal*," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, XXXI (1882), 555–563; XXXII (1883), 28–48; Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness* (The Hague, 1963), 102ff.; Eliezer Schweid, *History of Jewish Philosophy from the Late Middle Ages to Modern Times* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1971), 108–109. The theory of double truth was ntroduced into Jewish thought by Isaac Albalag in the latter part of the hirteenth century. Albalag lived in Catalonia, Spain, and in 1292 he composed a Hebrew version of Ghazali's *Maqasid al-Falasifa* with introductory notes and a commentary. In this work, he posited the theory that philosophic knowledge and the teaching of revelation do not have to be in agreement. He probably borrowed this doctrine from the Latin Averroists, whose writings he knew. Until del Medigo no other Jewish thinker except for Albalag espoused the theory of double truth. Isaac Albalag, *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot*, ed. Georges Vajda (Jerusalem, 1973); Georges Vajda, *Issac Albalag* (Paris, 1960), 251–266; Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* (New York, 1964), 277–280.

42 Arthur Hyman & James Walsh ed. *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1967), 450–451; Etienne Gilson, *Études de philosophie mediėvale* (Strassbourg, 1921), 59–60; Stuart MacClintock, *Perversity and Error* (Bloomington, 1956), 89–90; *Idem*, "Heresy and Epithet," *Review of Metaphysics*, VIII (1954–55), 176–191, 345–352, 534–544; Anneliese Maier, *Metaphysische Hintergrunde der Spätscholastischen Naturphilosophie* (Rome, 1953), 10–11; Eugenio Garin, *Rinascimento Italiano* (Florence, 1961), 293–297.

will be briefly summarized. The doctrines of these medieval thinkers best typify what has been referred to as a theory of double truth. Siger of Brabant never used the word truth in relation to philosophy. He stated that the conclusions of reason were based solely on the opinions of Aristotle. While he viewed the canons of philosophy as necessary, rational and logically valid, Siger never labeled them as true since they were only conclusions arrived at through the process of reason. "We say these things as the opinion of the Philosopher, although not asserting them as true." Siger spoke of truth only when referring to revelation based on faith.[43]

John of Jandun stressed the role of intellect and sense-perception in arriving at philosophic conclusions. While the thought processes may lead one to conclusions contrary to revelation, John of Jandun did not regard such conclusions as being true. They were only the results of the logical reasoning of the intellect which is limited to empirical knowledge. Only God's revelations, whose origins we may not comprehend, were to be considered as truth.[44] Thus, neither of these two men, normally characterized as the major adherents of the double truth theory, maintained the theory in a pure form. What they did was to identify the possibility of a contradiction between faith and reason.

Elijah del Medigo maintained a variety of the theory of double truth since he advocated that both religion and philosophy had their own methodology and, for the most part, each discipline primarily discusses its own topics. If faith and reason were to deal with the same subject matter, there is still no problem. The subject can be approached by each discipline only within the boundaries of their individual methodologies. There can be no transference of conclusions from one discipline to the other. Even when philosophy arrives at a doctrine which conflicts with a doctrine of Judaism so that the Jew cannot accept it according to faith, that doctrine is

43 Fernand van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West*, trans. by Leonard Johnston (Louvain, 1955), 227–228; Gilson, *Études de philosophie medièvale*, 58; MacClintock, "Heresy and Epithet," 526–527.

44 MacClintock, *Perversity and Error*, 90–91; *Idem*, "Heresy and Epithet," 538–544.

still considered a part of the teachings of philosophy since it was demonstrated according to the methodology of philosophy.

To render del Medigo's point of view more exact, selections from his various writings will be cited. In the *Question on the Efficiency of the Universe*, dated 1480, del Medigo stated:

> If anything will be said (in this treatise) contrary to the Law (Torah), this will not be surprising since I want to speak of the ideas of the philosophers according to their foundations (of the ideas), for the approach of the Law, in which faith is placed, is different from the philosophic approach...[45]

In another passage in the introduction to the treatises on the intellect in 1481, del Medigo wrote:

> I do not think that the words of the Torah are explained through the method of philosophy nor does the former (Torah) need the latter (philosophy). No one thinks this way, according to my point of view, except for the man who is neither an adherent of Torah nor a philosopher... Moreover no one should think me in error because in my philosophic works I deal with the philosophers according to their methodology...[46]

Then, in the *Examination of Religion*, 1490, he went a bit further when he said:

> Therefore, I did not choose in my treatise on intellectual study to argue with the philosophers concerning matters in

45 This quotation is in John of Jandun, *Super Octo Libros Physicorum*, 133a. Cf. Bohdan Kieszkowski, *Studi sul Platonismo del Rinascimento in Italia* (Florence, 1936), 144; Eugenio Garin, *Italian Humanism*, trans. by Peter Munz (Oxford, 1966), 97; Julius Guttmann, "Elia del Medigos...," 208. Merlan, *Monopsychism...*, 113ff.

46 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, fol. 79a. אני לא אחשב שדברי תורה יתבארו בדרך הפלוסופות וגם לא נצטרך לזה ולא יחשוב זה כי אם האיש אשר לא תורני ולא פילוסוף... ולכן אין ראוי לאדם לחשוב עלי תועה בזה כי במאמרי׳ פילוסופי׳ הולך אני בדרך הפילוסופי׳.

> regard to which they do not agree with us philosophically for such matters are not within the purview of intellectual study.[47]

Hence, it is clear that del Medigo separated religion and philosophy along methodological lines. The goal of Judaism was to provide every Jew with an understanding of the truths of faith and the aim of philosophy was to clarify earlier philosophic doctrines. Both faith and reason must therefore use those methods which are essential to their endeavors. Del Medigo was quite explicit on this point. While he united faith and reason in certain areas, i.e. points of religion which are not fundamental, he separated them in others, i.e. the fundamental principles and points of conflict between the two.

In trying to ascertain del Medigo's approach to the theory of double truth, it is well to note that his system can not be equated with any one of the three aforementioned explanations of this doctrine but does possess aspects of each. His position appears to be similar to that of Siger when he points out that the goal of philosophy is to explain the teachings of his philosophic predecessors. In Jewish philosophic circles in the fifteenth century, the thinkers were mainly writing commentaries on the works of philosophers such as Maimonides and Averroes rather than producing original treatises. Thus it is possible that del Medigo absorbed this approach to philosophy from his Jewish contemporaries. It can also be argued that he acquired this understanding of philosophy from Averroes himself since del Medigo said:

> Just as Averroes explained Aristotle's words fully, I have to explain the words of Averroes since such wisdom (that of Averroes) has almost been lost in our day.[48]

Returning to del Medigo's theory of double truth, it will be seen that his resolution of the conflict between faith and reason bears

47 E. del Medigo, *Beḥinat ha-Dat*, 18–19.

48 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, fol. 3a. כאשר החכם הזה ב״ר ביאר דברי ארסטו גם אני בארתי דברי ב״ר כי כמעט החכמה קריבה להפסד בזמנינו.

some similarities to that of Jandun. Jandun argued that in case of disagreement between the conclusions of philosophy and the teachings of revelation, one turns to revelation because it is true.[49] Del Medigo said on this conflict:

> I do not verify all which is said (by the philosophers) and especially in regard to matters which perhaps are in opposition to the Holy Torah...[50]

> However, I relied on prophecy (revelation) and the tradition of truth...[51]

Del Medigo does not draw the lines as sharply as Jandun, but his conclusion is very much like Jandun's. Even though del Medigo's modified theory of double truth emphasizes the significance of the methodology of each body of knowledge, he still maintained that where philosophy differed with faith on a fundamental doctrine, one must ultimately rely on the position of revelation as embodied in the teachings of Judaism. In such a disagreement, del Medigo made it quite clear what action he would take, when he wrote:

> I will fight a holy war with the doctrines of the philosophers which appear contradictory to the Torah even though I think that when the Torah and wisdom are understood correctly there will be no conflict between them.[52]

This absence of any real controversy between the two disciplines was the essence of his theory of double truth.

49 MacClintock, *Perversity and Error*, 88–89.

50 Paris Hebrew MSS 986, fol. 79a. ולא אאמת כל אשר אומר ובפרט בדברים אשר אולי הם נגד התורה הקדושה.

51 E. del Medigo, *Beḥinat ha-Dat*, 19.

52 Paris Hebrew MSS 968, fol. 177a. ואלחם מלחמת מצוה במה שנראה מדבריהם סותר לתורה ואע״פ שאחשוב שכשיושבנו התורה והחכמה כראוי לא יהיה מחלוקת ביניהם.

APPENDIX

The most recent listing in 1970 of the writings of Elijah del Medigo contains many inaccuracies. Therefore, it is necessary to present this all-inclusive list of his writings, and their present locations, if they are in manuscript. For further bibliographical information on the works of Elijah del Medigo see the following: Jules Dukas, *Recherches sur l'histoire littéraire du quinzième siècle* (Paris, 1876); Moritz Steinschneider, "Elia del Medigo" *Hebraeische Bibliographie*, XXI (1881), 60–71; Giovanni Mercati, *Codici Latini Pico Grimani Pio* (Rome, 1938), 31–35.

THE WORKS OF ELIJAH DEL MEDIGO

Original Works

Quaestiones: De Primo Motore, De Mundi Efficientia, De Esse Essentia et Uno. In John of Jandun, *Super Octo Libros Physicorum* (Venice, 1488), 122a–134b. (Reprinted in seven editions until 1551).

De Esse Essentia et Uno. In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Latin MSS, 6508, fol. 86a–87b, 92a–95b.

Adnotationes in Plurima Dicto. In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Latin MSS 6508, fol. la–70b.

——. In John of Jandun, *Super Octo Libros Physicorum* (Venice, 1488), 135a–151b.

Commentary on De Substantia Orbis (Latin). In Vatican Latin MSS 4553 Selections also in Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 6508, 95b–98a.

Commentary on De Substantia Orbis (Hebrew). In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 968, fol. 2a–77a.

Two Questions on the Intellect (Hebrew). I *On the Unity of the Intellect*. II *On Conjunction.* In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 968, fol. 79b–150b, 150b–177b.

Beḥinat ha-Dat (*Examination of Religion*). In Josef Shlomo del Medigo, *Ta'alumot Ḥokma* (Basel, 1926), 2a–8a.

——. Vienna, 1833.

Letters

Letter to Pico (1486). In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 6508, fol. 71a–77b.

Letter to Domenico Grimani (1488). In Paris Bibliotheque Nationale MSS 6508, fol. 78a. *In Meteorologica Aristotelis* (Venice, 1488).

Translations

Averrois Quaestio in Libro Priorum. In Vatican Latin MSS 4552.

——. In Laurentius Maioli, *Epiphyllides in Dialecticis* (Venice, 1497).

——. In Aegidius Romanus, *Quaestiones*. (Venice, 1552).

In Meteorologica Aristotelis (Averroes' *Epitome of Meteorologica*). In Vatican Latin MSS 4550, fol. 53a–61a.

——. Venice, 1488.

Averrois Commentatio in Meteora Aristotelis (*Middle Commentary*). In Vatican Latin MSS 4550, fol. 1–51b.

Averrois Commentatio in Metaphysicus Aristotelis (*Middle Commentary*). In *Aristotelis Opera Omnia*, Vol. XII, 218–220. Fragment in Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Latin MSS 6508, 81b–83a.

Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic. In Siena Latin MSS G. VII, 32.

Averroes' Proem to 12th Book of Metaphysics. In Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 6508 fol. 78a–81a.

De Spermate. In *Aristotelis Opera Omnia*, (Venice, 1560), Vol. XII, 220–222.

Averrois Commentatio in Metaphysicus Aristotelis (Epitome). Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MSS 6508, fol. 83a–84b.

Delaware Jewry: The Formative Years 1872-1889

By M. David Geffen

Offprint from *Delaware History*, Vol. XVI, No. 4
(Fall-Winter, 1975), pp. 269-297

E R R A T A

p. 269, line 3 should read Commercial

p. 270, footnote 5, line 3 should read
southeast

p. 271, footnote 8, line 2 should read 332

p. 273, line 1 omit of

p. 277, line 33 should read S.E.

p. 281, line 27 should end with footnote 40

p. 281, line 15 should read 1880, not 1806

p. 293, line 32 should read Slobodka Yeshiva

p. 296, footnote 84, line 2 should read
1885, not 1895

Delaware Jewry: The Formative Years 1872-1889

By M. David Geffen *

On October 16 and 17, 1872, two articles and a classified advertisement appeared in the *Wilmington Daily Commerical* and the *Every Evening* announcing the determination to build a Jewish synagogue in Wilmington, Delaware:

> Nearly all the religious denominations have a house of worship in Wilmington except the Jewish people, and now it is proposed by them to erect a new building or fix up one to be used as a synagogue. Messrs. F. L. Frank and N. Lieberman have the credit of leading this enterprise, and in such hands the enterprise will, doubtless, be carried through to completion. Subscription books will be opened for donations in aid of this church, and when a sufficient amount is raised to justify it—the work will be commenced.[1]
>
> It will be seen by a notice which appears in our advertisement columns, that an effort is being made by the Israelites of this city to secure the erection of a synagogue. We heartily wish them success in their effort. Nearly every faith has here its house of worship, and it is quite time that the most ancient of them all had its tabernacle.[2]
>
> NOTICE—A Meeting of the Israelites of this city was held yesterday for the purpose of raising sufficient funds for the erection of a synagogue or tabernacle of worship. The officers are J.

*The author has been the rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom in Wilmington since 1970. He attended Emory University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Rabbi Geffen was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Columbia University where he earned a doctorate in philosophy. He is the founder of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware.

1 *Wilmington Daily Commercial,* Oct. 17, 1872.
2 *Every Evening* (Wilmington), Oct. 16, 1872.

> DeWolf, president; N. Lieberman, vice-president; Joseph Row, corresponding secretary.[3]

Following a second meeting, two other announcements about this new enterprise appeared in the newspapers, and in the final article in the *Every Evening* the name of the new congregation was reported as " Roudaf Shoulam " which means " Pursuers of Peace." In addition, the story in the *Every Evening* added the following:

> The congregation is much in need of a burying ground, their customs forbidding them to bury their dead in a Christian cemetery, so that if a Jew died in Wilmington his remains were always taken to Philadelphia for interment.[4]

The acquisition of a burial ground had motivated other American Jewish communities in their earlier years, and this was also the concern of the leaders of this new congregation. In spite of the efforts of Nathan Lieberman, Henry Buxbaum, J. DeWolf, Joseph Row and F. L. Frank, as noted in the newspaper, the congregation never came into being. However, the interest of the Jews had been aroused, and in September, 1873, " divine services " were held for the High Holidays on the second floor of the building at Fifth and Market streets.[5] Subsequently, that structure was bought by Nathan Lieberman and was well known for many years as the " Lieberman Building." Thus it was in this edifice that the Jews in the city initiated their worship services and began to erect the base for even more diverse activities as the number of Jewish residents in Wilmington became larger. Before studying this crystallization of the Jewish community in Delaware in its formative years, it is necessary to survey briefly the earlier history of the Jews in Delaware.

Although Delaware was between two large centers of eighteenth and nineteenth century Jewish population, Baltimore and

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Every Evening*, Nov. 5, 1872.

[5] *Every Evening*, Sept. 20, 1873. The High Holidays commence with two days of Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, followed by a penitential period climaxed by Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Lieberman building was on the southwest corner of Fifth and Market streets.

Philadelphia, it was the last of the original thirteen states to have an organized Jewish community and worship services in the state for the High Holidays.[6] The lack of a *minyan,* quorum, of Jews living in Delaware prior to 1870, seems to indicate that most Jews who did business in Delaware returned to the larger cities for their religious needs. The climate in Delaware was not hostile to Jews, and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there were positive statements about Jews in the Delaware press. For example, the following item appeared in the *Delaware Gazette* on September 10, 1850, under the heading of " Jewish Liberality."

> A foreign paper states that lately a deputation waited on Sir Moses Montefiore, to ask his assistance in their efforts to build a church. 'You know my religious opinion,' replied the excellent Jew, 'I cannot give you money to build a church—there are five hundred guineas for you to do what you like with.'[7]

Montefiore was an English Jew who was well known in Jewish circles for his magnificent contributions to Jewish philanthropy and for his leadership of significant projects affecting Jews throughout the world, for example, the resettlement of Palestine, and other worthy causes.[8] The editor of the Delaware newspaper, however, was impressed by Montefiore's generosity to all faiths. But Montefiore was not the only Jew praised in the newspaper. In discussing the views on Judas of Mordecai Manuel Noah, the eminent author and government official from New York, the *Gazette* stated: " We commend these views of the learned scribe among the Jews of the 19th century to Christian ministers." [9] Through its

[6] Bernard Postal & Lionel Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide to the United States* (Philadelphia, 1954), 299-300, 615-616.

[7] *Delaware Gazette,* Sept. 10, 1850.

[8] Bertram Korn, *The American Reaction to the Mortara Case; 1858-1859* (Cincinnati, 1957), 27, 3$2-35. Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), having acquired wealth at an early age, retired in 1824 and devoted the rest of his life to the service of the Jewish people throughout the world. Because he was so well-known, the first Jewish organization in Delaware, founded in 1879, was named after him.

[9] *Delaware Gazette,* Apr. 22, 1847. Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785-1851) was the first American Jew to hold a diplomatic post when he was named United States Consul at Tunis in 1813. He held many governmental positions, was a playwright and scholar; and in 1825 he attempted to found a Jewish colony called " Ararat " on Grand Island in the Niagara River near Buffalo, New York.

columns the *Delaware Gazette,* the most influential paper in the state, gave Delawareans a positive image of the Jew.

Even early Delaware history is punctuated with a few Jewish traders and resident merchants. In 1655, two Jews, Isaac Cardoso and Isaac Israel, were identified as being traders on the South River, the Delaware River.[10] In the eighteenth century, Daniel Nunez, Jr., living in Lewes, married into the well-known Kollock family of Delaware. Although he attempted to live his life as a Christian and was baptized, he was identified in a 1750 surveyor's report as "Nunes the Jew." He later served as a country sheriff, and he was in the state legislature along with Caesar Rodney and George Read.[11]

The first Jew to actually live in Wilmington was Abraham Judah. He and his wife Brigitte and their family moved to the city in 1751, and he bought a house on the Kennett Pike. His house was located next to property belonging to Thomas Canby, and it was used for a store in addition to being the Judah residence. Abraham Judah was a merchant who sold such things as West Indian rum and East Indian and European goods.[12] In 1761 he moved with his family to Philadelphia, and his son David enrolled as a student at the Philadelphia college which was to become the University of Pennsylvania.[13] Judah died several years later in Philadelphia, and after his death the lawyers for his heirs sold his Delaware property to another Wilmingtonian.[14]

Nunez and Judah were followed in the state by two other Sephardim, Jews of Spanish-Portuguese origin. They were the Solis brothers, Jacob and Daniel, who had a store in Wilmington from 1815 to 1820. They openly advertised their

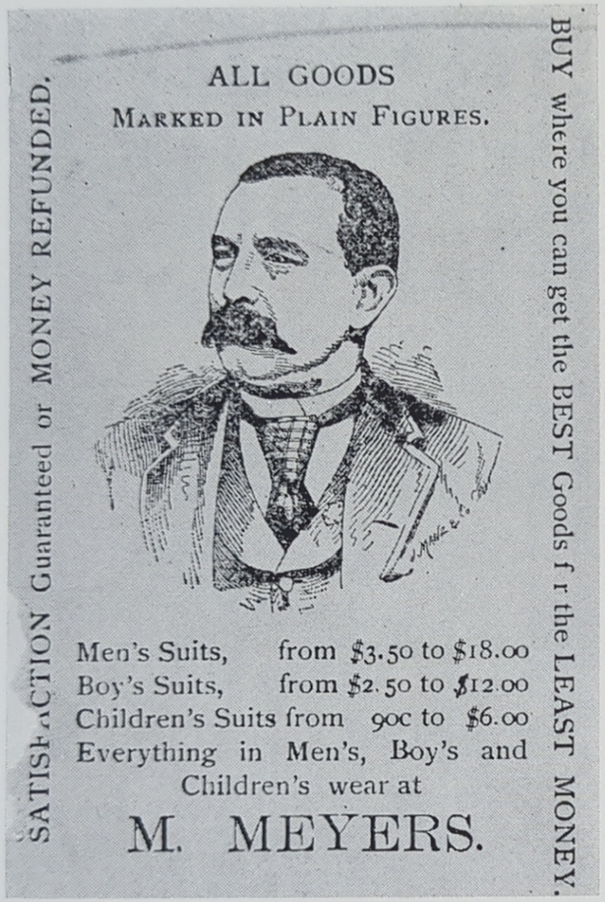
10 Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia From Colonial Times To the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1957), 10, 383-385. Jacob R. Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew* (Detroit, 1970), 334.

11 J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware 1609-1888* (Philadelphia, 1888), I, 144. "Journal of John Watson, Assistaint Surveyor to the Commissioners Province of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,* XXXIX (1915), 8, 28.

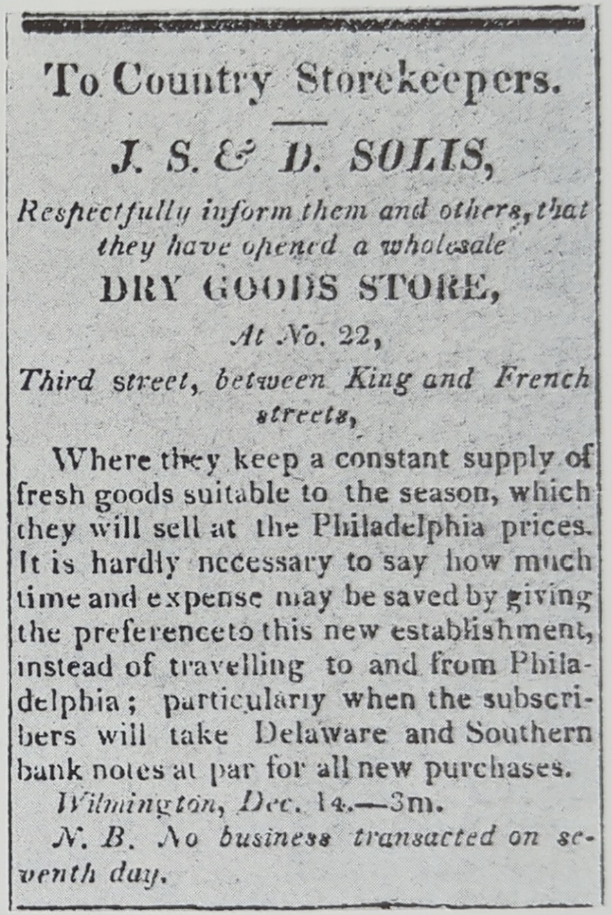
12 *Pennsylvania Gazette,* Jan. 1, 1761.

13 Wolf and Whiteman, *Jews of Philadelphia,* 39, 42-43, 391.

14 Deed of property sold to Abraham Judah by Timothy Stedham, June 15, 1751. Deed of same piece of property sold by attorneys for heirs of Abraham Judah to Joseph Lawson, November 12, 1770. Gilpin Collection, Box 59, Folder 2, (Historical Society of Delaware).



Trading card of Meyer Meyers, Wilmington merchant from 1869 to early 1890s. His picture first appeared on the card in 1888, and it is the earliest picture known of a Jew in Delaware. (Both illustrations published with permission of the Historical Society of Delaware.



To Country Storekeepers.

J. S. & D. SOLIS,

Respectfully inform them and others, that they have opened a wholesale

DRY GOODS STORE,

At No. 22,

Third street, between King and French streets,

Where they keep a constant supply of fresh goods suitable to the season, which they will sell at the Philadelphia prices. It is hardly necessary to say how much time and expense may be saved by giving the preference to this new establishment, instead of travelling to and from Philadelphia; particularly when the subscribers will take Delaware and Southern bank notes at par for all new purchases.

Wilmington, Dec. 14.—3m.

N. B. No business transacted on seventh day.

Advertisement of Jacob and Daniel Solis, Wilmington clothiers from 1814 to 1821. The advertisement first appeared in the *Delaware Gazette and Peninsula Bulletin* on December 14, 1815. The statement "No business transacted on seventh day" makes it the earliest known advertisement of a Jewish-owned business establishment.

Judaism when they published the following line in their ad of of December, 1815: "No business transacted on seventh day." [15] Since too much business was being lost, in 1816 the ad was changed to read: "No business transacted on 7th day, till after sunset." [16] Another merchant, who lived in Wilmington at this same period, was Isaac Solomon. He left Judaism for Christianity, as implied in his obituary and as seen by his grave which is located in Asbury Methodist Cemetery, the second oldest in Wilmington.[17]

Also resident in Wilmington in the middle of the nineteenth century was Captain Henry B. Nones, the offspring of a highly respected Philadelphia Jewish family. He was in the Revenue Service from 1831 to 1868. Nones was stationed at Wilmington from 1843 until his death in 1868. He fought in the Mexican War, and was cited by Commodore Perry; and he also served in the Civil War under Admiral Samuel DuPont, who was an old friend of his.[18] The grave of Henry B. Nones, located in the Wilmington and Brandywine Cemetery, is marked by a cross which may either indicate his conversion to Christianity or that his non-Jewish wife had him buried there.

In 1853, Wilmington was just beginning to grow when Joseph Row moved from Baltimore and set up a tailor shop in the city at 316 Market Street, the main thoroughfare of the city. He was followed in 1858 by his brother-in-law Lewis Richenberger, who opened up a clothing store. At this period the Jews of Germany were pouring into the United States, and it was only natural that a few should make their way to Delaware. During the Civil War, three of the German immigrants, Nathan Lieberman, Henry Buxbaum, and J. DeWolf moved into Wilmington; and they each established a clothing store on Market Street.[19]

[15] *Delaware Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1815.

[16] *Ibid.*, Apr. 15, 1816.

[17] *Delaware Gazette*, Sept. 9, 1842.

[18] Scharf, *History of Delaware*, I, 321. In a letter to Admiral DuPont dated June 12, 1849, at the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library (W9-5425), Henry Nones wrote, "I am at a loss for words to express to you the many obligations I feel under and shall never cease to remember them with feelings of gratitude."

[19] *Wilmington City Directory, 1853, 1862, 1864.* Nathan Lieberman was the only one of the original Jewish settlers who remained in Wilmington, and he died in 1906.

With the conclusion of the Civil War, a great boom occurred in Wilmington, and it became a leading industrial city along the eastern seaboard. Lieberman, more than his fellow Jewish merchants, sensed the potentialities in Wilmington, and he purchased real estate in various areas of the city and its environs.[20] However, the number of Jews was still too tiny to attempt any form of organization. Both Rabbi Benjamin Szold and Rabbi Henry Hochheimer of Baltimore were always prepared to come to Delaware to officiate at weddings and funerals.[21] Yet, the Jewish families in Wilmington were severely depressed when they read an article entitled " Jews in America " on the front page of a new daily paper, the *Every Evening,* on December 23, 1871.

> A writer in the January *Galaxy,* himself a Hebrew, takes the ground that the Jews of this country will ultimately be merged with their Christian neighbors, and become undistinguishable from them. Only two agencies in his opinion, prevent the consummation of that event during the present generation, the command which forbids intermarriage with Gentiles, and the ordinance of circumcision. The writer maintains that while the present generation will probably obey both of these laws, they are daily losing their force under the progressive influence of the age, and the cosmopolitan spirit of the American people; and believes the second generation of Hebrews born in this country will refuse obedience to these two ancient ordinances, and that within fifty years, they will in their facial expression, habits, observance, and norms of worship, becomes undistinguishable from the mass of humanity around them.[22]

The *Galaxy,* a national monthly publication, had commissioned a Jewish writer to analyze the situation of Jews in this country. Being as objective as he could, he sensed " the

20 *Delaware Republican,* Jan. 10, 1872. *Delaware Gazette,* Feb. 12, 1874. *Every Evening,* Apr. 26, 1879. By 1888 Nathan Lieberman owned $66,000 worth of taxable property in Wilmington.

21 *Sunday Star* (Wilmington), Sept. 10, 1882. In the record of marriages 1850-1900 of Reverend Dr. Henry Hochheimer, there is listed a wedding he performed in Wilmington between B. Greensfelder and Mrs. Hannah Myers on December 29, 1863. This volume is in the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts.

22 *Every Evening,* Dec. 23, 1871.

progressive influence of the age, and the cosmopolitan spirit of the American people," as the fundamental challenge to Judaism in America. Since he could not foresee any factors that would work to strengthen Judaism, he drew his negative conclusions about the forthcoming fifty years.[23] That Jew, whoever he may have been, had no way of knowing what would transpire ten years later in Russia. The events there, beginning in 1881 with the assassination of the Czar and the subsequent pogroms, were to trigger a stream of immigration to America that would ultimately bring over two million Jews to these shores. Yet in 1871, with only 200,000 Jews in all of the United States, the future did look bleak for American Judaism, and the Wilmington paper did not hesitate to print this report.[24]

By the following year, 1872, a new sense of communal purpose was displayed by the Jews of Wilmington, as evidenced in the newspaper reports quoted at the outset of this article. A congregational organization was set up; officers were selected; a name was chosen. Subscription books for the synagogue were displayed in several of the leading stores in the city. Jewish communal enthusiasm may also have been fueled by the notice taken of *The Israelite,* the newspaper of Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of the Hebrew Union College. Since 1872 was a presidential year, the campaign was on in full force. The *Wilmington Daily Gazette* published an article from *The Israelite* which contained the Jewish opinions concerning Senator Wilson, the Republican vice-presidential candidate.[25] This article helped to demonstrate that the general community of Wilmington was becoming more conscious of the Jewish point-of-view about candidates for national office in America.

[23] The author of this article in the *Galaxy* was W. M. Rosenblatt, and it was originally entitled "The Jews—What They Are Coming To." His conclusions about American Jewry were widely circulated both in this country and in Europe. Abraham Karp, "Address of the President," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly,* LXIII, 3.

[24] Lloyd P. Gartner, "Immigration and The Formation of American Jewry, 1840-1925," *Jewish Society Through the Ages,* ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger (New York, 1971), 297, 304. Out of the Wilmington population of 31,000, according to the 1870 census, there were only twelve known Jewish families. This figure made a Jewish future in Wilmington appear quite precarious.

[25] *Wilmington Daily Gazette,* Sept. 30, 1872. Senator Henry Wilson ran as the Republican vice-presidential candidate in 1872 when U. S. Grant was reelected as president. Wilson died in office in 1875. *The Israelite* was published in Cincinnati, Ohio.

With this kind of community concern, the Jews of Wilmington believed that the appropriate time had arrived for an organization. The group structure worked, money was subscribed, but the consummation of their efforts in a synagogue building was not possible because there were not enough Jewish families in Wilmington at that time. It was to take eight more years for this to occur.

The picture of Wilmington Jewry in the seventies is seen through the scanty references to High Holiday services, but mostly through the advertisements of the Jewish merchants in the local newspapers. In an 1874 map of Wilmington, which includes numbered locations and a corresponding list identifying these numbers, Henry Buxbaum was mistakenly listed as No. 84, having a store at the southeast corner of Fifth and Market streets. His store was actually located at the southeast corner of Third and Market streets.[26] Buxbaum's inclusion on a map of Wilmington did not protect him from publicly having his grammar corrected. On September 16, 1873, the following letter was published entitled " Buxbaum's Sign."

> There is such a word as men's, it is found in the possessive plural in the declension of the noun man, thus: Nominative, men; Possessive, men's; Objective, men. The construction of the sentence, 'Men's and Boys Clothing,' is faulty, the sign of possession should be affixed to the noun that immediately precedes the governing word 'clothing,' thus: 'Henry Buxbaum, Men and Boys' Clothing.' [27]

This item was to indicate to the reader that correct grammar was most important in the composition of signs. Whether Buxbaum was the only offender of this type is a question that remains unanswered. He was probably being criticized more as a foreigner than as a Jew. In subsequent advertisements he altered his sign to read " Henry Buxbaum, Men and Boys' Clothing." Buxbaum's problems extended a bit further because in 1874 his son and one other student were denied perfect attendance medals. The report of the incident in the *Every Evening* was both heartening and discouraging.

[26] *Map of Wilmington, Delaware, 1874,* H. H. Bailey & Co. Artists (Albany, 1874).

[27] *Every Evening,* Sept. 16, 1873.

> Two little boys in the public schools were denied medals for punctual attendance under the following circumstances: George Ward, son of George C. Ward, had the toothache so bad that he was hardly able to go to School, but remained nevertheless till the roll was called, and the teacher rather urged him to go home and thus he lost part of a half day. Another little boy Willie Buxbaum, son of Mr. Buxbaum, clothier, 2nd & Market, lost one day in attending the Jewish festival, which is held to be a sacred day by his parents. He was first granted a medal, but it was subsequently denied him by the Board of Education. The boys fairly won the medals they were striving for and will wear them in their hearts. No act of the Board, if it so desired to act, could deprive those boys of the merit they deserve.[28]

When studying Delaware newspapers, one finds this item to be the initial evidence of a student being deprived of an award because he missed school to attend a Jewish religious service. No subsequent reports of such punitive action are known until the beginning of this century, and it is clear, in this first instance, that even the newspaper was not in agreement with the policy of the school administration.

The other merchants were also quite visible through their advertisements. In the *Harkness Magazine,* a local publication, it is noted that F. L. Frank at 511 Market Street has the clothes " The Ladies Like to Purchase." [29] An item in the " About Town " column has the following: " An overcoat for a mere song at DeWolf. We saw a man with a fit the other day. He said he got it at DeWolf's and didn't have to pay much for it." [30] Nathan Lieberman's ads began on a limited basis, but by the middle 1870s he had the largest daily ad in the *Every Evening.* It is no wonder that his store had to be enlarged. The following news item appeared on January 14, 1875.

> Mr. Nathan Lieberman, one of Wilmington's leading clothing merchants, S. W. Corner Fifth & Market Streets, intends about March 25, uniting with his present establishment the second story

28 *Wilmington Daily Gazette,* Aug. 8, 1874. This article also placed Buxbaum's store at the wrong location.

29 *Harkness Magazine* (Wilmington), 2 (1872), 110.

30 *Every Evening,* Jan. 1, 1874.

front room in his building, now occupied by the Workingmen's Institute. The second floor will be used as a salesroom for youth's, boy's and children's clothing. Mr. Lieberman's business last year increased beyond expectation, and he is compelled to make the above alteration. The present establishment was enlarged last year by removing the partition between the stores Nos. 426 and 428 Market St. and making them one undivided store, and when the second floor is added, the house will be four times as large as formerly.[81]

Wilmington, as a city, was growing, and as its population increased, the Jewish merchants benefited from the larger volume of business. Nathan Lieberman and the others were helping to perfect the art of merchandising in Delaware.

The best evidence of the attitude of the community toward the Jewish people is to be found in a reprinted news story and in a book review in the editorial column. The news story appeared in the *Every Evening* two days after Yom Kippur in 1874 and under the heading of "New York Hebrews" read as follows:

The New York letter to the Philadelphia Ledger says: The commanding influence of the Hebrew element in almost every department of business, wholesale and retail, is never so noticeable as on the recurrence of their great fast of the atonement, when all secular occupations are suspended. The Stock Exchange and the Board of Brokers not only misses them, but most of the other great exchanges, as well as the retail marts of Chatham Street, Division Street and Eighth Avenue. Probably there is no other religious festival the observance of which would make such a vacuum in the sphere of general business. At the Weehawken cattle market also, where hundreds of thousands of dollars are disbursed weekly, the day had a Sunday appearance, owing to the conspicuous absence of the same class of dealers.[82]

The economic power of the Jew was recognized best on Yom Kippur, when the holiest day of the Jewish year was observed. In this article respect was expressed not only for the position of the Jew in the commercial world, but also for his adherence to his religious tradition.

[81] *Ibid.*, Jan. 14, 1875.
[82] *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1874.

In the middle 1870s there was a growing sympathy not only in America but throughout the world for the Jews and their problems. One of the more poignant examples of this concern was to be found in George Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda.* The book dealt most compassionately with the theme of the return of the Jewish people to the ancestral homeland in Palestine, and its central character was a Jew possessing the most admirable traits. An editorial book review of the novel appeared in one of the Wilmington evening papers in September, 1876, a review which was high in praise of the book and the author. Moreover, the reviewer indicated the newly accepted status of the Jew when he stated:

> An intense sympathy with the Jews is a leading idea of the *denouement.* This, perhaps, may be hardly a surprise in modern sentiment, where something of a reaction has undoubtedly taken place, which can be traced to many causes, the gradual deepening of our sympathy, an earnestness and comprehensiveness characteristic of the century, and perhaps the lustre of great and illustrious names where formerly there was only darkness and degradation. Mordecai [the hero of the novel] is interesting as showing how the circumstances of being born a Jew would affect a mind of that calibre.[33]

Modern sentiment, as the reviewer pointed out, had seen a change in the general attitude about the Jews, a type of enlightenment on the part of the general population. One possible source of this change in point of view, at this particular time, might have been the worldwide reputation of certain Jewish people, e. g. the Rothschilds, Montefiores, and others. This reviewer suggested that in the past, in contrast, Jews had only been linked with "darkness and degradation." The underlying message of the review was the concern that all should now have for the Jew. The atmosphere in Wilmington toward the Jews was a kindly one, indeed, except on a few occasions when the phrase "No Jewing" was slipped into an ad.[34]

[33] *Ibid.,* Sept. 21, 1876.

[34] *Morning Herald* (Wilmington), Dec. 29, 1877. The phraseology of "No Jewing" was found in an ad for the Boston One-Price Clothing House of V. E.

In the 1870s the religious exercises of the community were mentioned only at the High Holiday season. The worship services in the community were held initially at the Lieberman Building at Fifth and Market streets, then the Morrow Building at 211 Market Street, and then on Shipley Street between Third and Fourth streets.[35] In 1875 Rabbi Hertzberg of Philadelphia officiated, and in 1878 Rabbi Weis of Philadelphia came to Wilmington to conduct the services.[36] The fall of 1879 proved to be a turning point because that year a local reporter attended the Kol Nidre service of Yom Kippur which fell on Friday night, and he wrote a front page story about the service the next day.[37] However, even before the holidays, organizational movements had been afoot under the guidance of a new Wilmington resident, Barney Rosenblatt, a barber and Civil War veteran. The night after Yom Kippur, the first permanent Jewish organization was established in the city.

On Saturday, Yom Kippur had been observed with all solemnity in the Morrow Building, 211 Market Street. Now on Sunday evening, September 28, 1879, a small group of Jewish leaders met at the home of Nathan Lieberman on West Street. Barney "Frisco" Rosenblatt presided, and Julius K. Fisher, married two years before by Rabbi Michael Elkan of Philadelphia in the Saenger Hall, was the secretary of the meeting. After "brief speeches" an organization, the Moses Montefiore Mutual Aid Society, was established. The first officers were as follows: George Jacobs, President, Julius K. Fisher, Secretary. Kaufman Sondheimer, Gershon Kahn, Lewis Fellheimer and Jacob DeWolf were appointed to the By-Laws Committee. The purpose of the Society was "to succor needy brethren," "to accumulate a fund for the payment of sick benefits," and "to aid indigent and unfortunate brethren, who may be cast ashore, so to speak in this city." The Montefiore

Holmes. It had been preceded by another such item in the same newspaper on August 18, 1877. That previous article was headed "Not a Jew," and it described the new clothing store of William Morrow, a well-known Wilmingtonian who was identified as "our worthy fellow citizen."

35 *Daily Republican* (Wilmington), Sept. 16, 1874. *Daily Gazette,* Sept. 28, 1876.

36 *Wilmington Daily Commercial,* Oct. 8, 1875. *Every Evening,* Sept. 27, 1878.

37 *Every Evening,* Sept. 27, 1879. The Kol Nidre service is the opening service of Yom Kippur, and it begins just before sundown on the eve of this fast day.

Society, which is today the oldest Jewish group in the state, soon took on even more responsibility than was presented in its stated goals. Since the initial group "Roudaf Shoulam" had not succeeded in 1872, it was the Montefiore Society in 1879, almost one hundred years ago, that organized the Jewish community and then brought everyone together for socializing, and for educational and religious needs.[38]

In January, 1880, the Montefiore Society engaged Rabbi A. Rosenberg of Philadelphia to be the rabbi-teacher and *shochet,* ritual slaughterer, for the community. Classes began on a Sunday in February, 1880, and were also held every evening from 6 to 8 p.m., except on Friday and Saturday. The curriculum of the school consisted of classes in German and Hebrew, and the institution was well advertised as the "Hebrew Night School for Scholars."[39] Rabbi Armin Rosenberg also began his official duties as the slaughterer of kosher animals. In an article entitled "The First Bullock," a reporter gave the following information:

> The Hebrew Rabbi, A. Rosenberg, who is also to be the Hebrew butcher, entered upon his latter function by killing the first bullock for his congregation yesterday. He will occupy Stall no. 35 Second Street Market. Only the forequarters are used by the Hebrews, as the blood cannot be fully extracted from the remainder of the animal. The rabbi inspects carefully all the animals slaughtered by him, affixing his seal to each piece pronounced by him as kosher or clean, and rejecting any meat which does not come up to the required standard.

In spite of all these efforts kosher meat was not in demand. By the end of the week, David Megill, out of whose stall in the Second Street Market the meat was sold, was quoted as saying:

> 'I have had such meats in the market, but the Jews give little or no patronage, and less price, so I am forced to retire from such

[38] *Every Evening,* Sept. 29, 1879; *Daily Republican,* Sept. 29; 1879; and *Daily Gazette,* Sept. 29, 1879. Presently, the same Montefiore Society is a burial society which offers benefits to needy Jewish families.

[39] *Every Evening,* Feb. 13, 1880. According to the newspaper report there were 15 to 20 people in regular attendance. This was considered to be a fine, positive beginning for Jewish education in Wilmington.

[40] *Every Evening,* Feb. 16, 1880.

> trade.' In making this announcement, Mr. Megill says he does not desire to cast any reflections upon the Hebrews, but the small amount of patronage that he received from them compelled him to take the position that he has taken.[41]

Following this initial attempt to provide kosher meat on a local basis, there is no indication that any further efforts were made to have a resident *shochet* in this area until 1887.

The Montefiore Society's next step was to plan a fund-raising affair, and the most convenient opportunity for such an event was the joyous holiday of Purim. Purim, which is described in the Book of Esther, celebrates the Jews' deliverance from the edict of destruction given by Haman. The entire tenor of the day is one of merriment, and in New York, beginning in 1865, the Purim Ball Association planned gala events on the holiday with all proceeds earmarked to help newly arrived immigrants and the impoverished. In New York the Purim Ball in the 1870s and 1880s was one of the most important social functions of the season.[42] Nathan Lieberman, in particular, was certain that the Montefiore Society could also plan a Purim Ball in Wilmington that would attract a large crowd of people.

On February 27, the Ball was held, and it was a mammoth success. Webster's Academy on the second floor of the Grand Opera House was packed, and the Grand March was stunning with 50 couples participating. For Wilmington Jewry it was the first public event, other than religious services, in their community, and they were duly pleased with its outcome. The proceeds of the evening were designated for the renovation of a room which would become the permanent synagogue.[43] For the next two weeks redecoration was done on the room, and invitations were sent out to members of the community to participate in the dedication of the synagogue, Friday evening, March 19, 1880. The event was most significant in the history

[41] *Delaware Gazette*, Feb. 19, 1880. In the *Wilmington City Directory, 1881-1882*, David Megill was listed as a butcher occupying Stall 35 in the Market.

[42] Paul Goodman, "The Purim Association of the City of New York (1862-1902)," *The Jewish Experience in America*, ed. Abraham J. Karp (New York, 1969), IV, 360-363, 373-378.

[43] *Every Evening*, Feb. 27, 1880.

of the city, and the newspapers described it on their front page as " The Dedication of the First Jewish Synagogue in Wilmington." [44]

The *Every Evening* reporter was at the service on the third floor of the Lieberman building and transmitted his impressions of the occasion. He began in this way:

> Until within the past few weeks the 18 or 20 Hebrews of Wilmington with their families have been without stated religious services, only meeting for worship on certain holidays in a room in the Morrow building. Since the inauguration of the Montefiore Association, however, a rabbi has been regularly engaged and a synagogue fitted up in the rear of the third story of the Lieberman building, Fifth and Market Streets.[45]

His reference to the number of Jewish families is fairly accurate, as can best be seen in the *Wilmington City Directory, 1806-1881* where 27 families are listed.[46] A supplementary census of that same year listed 97 Jews in Wilmington.[47] With such a group of Jews in town, the Montefiore Society, under the quiet but forceful leadership of Nathan Lieberman and the inspiration of Barney Rosenblatt, had been able to move to the natural culmination of its efforts, the establishment of a synagogue staffed by a resident rabbi. It was a great triumph for the labors of the Jewish families in Wilmington.

The remainder of the report on the dedication offered a description of this religious ceremony. " The services began at 4:30 p. m. and lasted for an hour and a half. . . . About 40 persons were present, the number being restricted to those to whom cards had been issued." The service was begun by the appearance of Rabbi Rosenberg at the door:

> After remaining stationary for a few moments he slowly moved up the aisle followed by Mr. Isaacs, the oldest Wilmington Israelite, who carried the *thara* [*Torah*] containing the sacred five books of Moses, inscribed upon parchment in Hebrew characters. Both the rabbi and Mr. Isaacs wore the long white vestment known

[44] *Every Evening*, Mar. 20, 1880.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] *Wilmington City Directory, 1881*. The population of Wilmington by 1880 had grown to 42,478, an increase or over 11,000 since the previous census.

[47] *Statistics of the Jews of the United States* (Cincinnati, 1880), 18.

> as *taled* [*talit*]. The pair passed slowly around the altar several times until the chant was finished, when the *thara* was deposited in the ark in the rear of the altar and the curtain of the ark closed.[48]

The dedication of a synagogue in the Jewish faith has always entailed the *Torah,* the Scroll of the Law, being carried into the synagogue by a senior member of the community. This is followed by his placing the *Torah* in the holy ark at the front of the sanctuary. The act of walking around the altar, as performed by Isaacs and the rabbi, always occurs on the holiday of Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Law. However, such a ceremony can be performed during the dedication of a synagogue. The bearer of the *Torah* always wears a *talit,* prayer shawl, but at the afternoon or evening service the remainder of the male congregation would be without this vestment. From the article it is clear that the ritual of this first synagogue was orthodox, but only a few of the Jewish people in Wilmington actually followed the ritual in their homes.

After the *Torah* had been placed in the ark, the Rabbi spoke to the assembled in German. The theme of his address was the verse from Psalm 122, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord." He spoke about the long years that the Jews of Wilmington had waited for this day. He urged God's blessing on this house of worship, and His divine guidance for all mankind. He concluded with an exhortation to those assembled to carry out God's commandments in all their activities. The story in the paper continued:

> It [the Rabbi's address] was followed by an antiphonal Hebrew chant, after which Mr. J. K. Fisher stepped forth and, in the name of the trustees, handed the key of the synagogue to the President of the congregation, Mr. George Jacobs, who in turn delivered it to the rabbi, expressing the belief that he would worthily keep the charge of the place of worship thus formally conferred upon him.[49]

Julius Fisher, who was mentioned earlier, was originally

[48] *Every Evening,* Mar. 20, 1880. Isaac Isaacs was the father of Mrs. Jacob DeWolf. He lived with his daughter at 208 E. Fifth Street.

[49] *Ibid.*

from Bridgeton, New Jersey, and in 1878 in Wilmington he had married Sarah Nogler, the daughter of Samuel Nogler, a wholesale manufacturer of clothing in the city.[50] After their marriage Julius Fisher went into business with his father-in-law. George Jacobs had a clothing store at 221 Market Street, and he had been in Wilmington for several years.[51] However, they were only the outward functionaries of the synagogue, since the power rested in the hands of Nathan Lieberman and Meyer Meyers, another Jewish merchant.[52]

A final ceremony was part of the synagogue's dedication, and it was duly noted by the reporter:

> The *jad* (pronounced very much like the English word 'yacht') was then handed to the rabbi, through the President, in the same way. It consists of a little carved hand, with the index finger extended, attached to the end of a rod about a foot in length and, as far as could be gathered from the presentation remarks, is a sort of emblematic guide board which is supposed to point heavenward.[53]

The reporter of the *Every Evening* could not have known that the *yad* was not an "emblematic guide board" pointing "heavenward" but the pointer used in the reading of the *Torah*. The *yad* is an ancient tool which originally came into use because the *Torah* scroll is not to be touched by a human hand during its reading. Instead, as the words of the scroll are entoned, the reader of the *Torah* points to each word with the *yad*. To the reporter, this board with a carved hand and extended finger could only be pointing to heaven.

The Rabbi concluded with the priestly blessing, the traditional blessing from the Book of Numbers 6: 24-26, in English rather than German or Hebrew. Then announcement was made of the Sabbath service to be held the next morning at 7 a. m. This showed that some people wanted to attend services before

[50] *Delaware Gazette*, Mar. 7, 1878. The Saenger Hall at 300 and 302 E. Fourth Street was the site of this wedding.

[51] *Wilmington City Directory, 1880-1881*

[52] Nathan Lieberman was quite a wealthy gentleman at this time and his influence in the general community was such that the rank and file listened to him. Meyer Meyers was a superb advertiser and clothing merchant whose opinions were always sought by his fellow Jews. Richard Edwards, ed., *Industries of Delaware* (Wilmington, 1888), 76.

[53] *Every Evening*, Mar. 20, 1880.

going to work. The concluding remark of the story indicated that the Jews of Wilmington were very moved to piety, and on the eve of the dedication strictly observed the laws of the Sabbath. Therefore the following occurred: "As some tenet of the Hebrew religion forbade any of the faithful to extinguish the lights on this occasion, an uncircumcized newspaper man then turned off the gas jets and the congregation dispersed."[54] Thus, even the non-Jewish reporter participated in the dedication of Wilmington's first synagogue. The synagogue was sponsored by the Montefiore Society, and was named Ohabe Shalom meaning "Lovers of Peace."

A few weeks after the new synagogue opened, Passover services were held, and the regular prayer services and classes continued. In the latter part of April, a report in the newspaper indicated dissension with the rabbi.

> It is not true as stated in the *Republican* yesterday that Rev. Dr. Rosenberg of the Jewish synagogue in this city has preemptorily resigned owing to the non-support of the members. Mr. Rosenberg will remain in charge although a slight dissatisfaction exists among a few of the members in regard to his teachings. The Congregation has sufficient funds in the bank to pay him a year's salary ahead.[55]

Nothing further is recorded in the public press, but during the summer, Rabbi Rosenberg left Wilmington, and Rabbi Morris Faber became the new spiritual leader.

While preparing for the first High Holidays in their new synagogue, the Jews of Wilmington were confronted with the visit of a converted rabbi to the city. This individual, a Professor Rieder of Baltimore, arrived on August 29, just a week before Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. He spoke at a local church, and then he gave a public lecture at the Grand Opera House on August 30 on "Jerusalem and the Jews." "About a hundred people were present, and another fifty left because they thought it was a free lecture and learning to the contrary did not enter."[56]

54 *Ibid.*
55 *Daily Gazette*, Apr. 6, 1880.
56 *Every Evening*, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 1880.

Professor Rieder referred to the fact that there was much antagonism toward him from Orthodox Jews, but he emphasized that "he has a strong affection for them." During his lecture he donned a garment similar to that worn by the priests in the Temple in ancient Palestine. He also put on the *talit* which prompted an observation on the Wilmington Jewish community by the reporter. "All orthodox still wear this garment, though the writer has learned that none of the Jews in Wilmington are so orthodox as to wear it, being more what are called Reformed Jews." [57] As has been seen above in the story of the synagogue dedication, Isaacs and the rabbi wore *talitot,* prayer shawls. This editorial comment about the usage of the *talit* in Wilmington was based on an individual view garnered by the reporter rather than on the facts. Professor Rieder closed with a Hebrew song, and one newspaper account stated that local Jews were in attendance and enjoyed his presentation. From the reports of the lecture it appeared to contain fewer missionary references than might have been expected.[58]

During the following weeks, the High Holidays were celebrated under the leadership of the new rabbi, Rabbi Faber. Another Jewish year, 5641, had begun for these pioneering Jews.[59]

In November, a son was born to George Jacobs, the president of the synagogue, and the description of the circumcision ceremony and the participants therein, contained many historical details.

> The second son of George A. Jacobs, who keeps a clothing store at 221 Market Street was formally inducted into the Israelitish Church Thursday last, by the performance of the ancient rite of Circumcision. The operation was performed by Rabbi Moses Breidenbach, of the Ancient Portuguese Congregation of Philadelphia, in the presence of about 20 Israelites and Dr. S. L. West.

[57] *Ibid.,* Sept. 1, 1880.

[58] *Morning News,* Sept. 1, 1880.

[59] *Every Evening,* Sept. 6, 15, 1880. The Jewish calendar year is calculated from the time of the creation of the world in accordance with the Biblical chronology. The calendar itself is based on the moon, numbering twelve months in a regular year and thirteen in a leap year.

> The circumcision was performed very quickly and dexterously, being over before the child had time to cry. The child, which is eight days old, has been named Jacob Jacobs—the full translation of his Hebrew name being Jacob, son of George Jacobs.
>
> After the ceremony, a repast was spread, to which the male members of the company sat down, chanting Hebrew prayers as they ate. In accordance with Jewish custom all kept their hats on during the ceremony and the repast.
>
> Rabbi B. says that he has circumcised about 6,040 children during his pastorate, which covers a period of 35 years. The first child he circumcised in this city was the son of Mr. Bacheraf, who was in the liquor business in this city about 25 years ago. Since that time he has performed the rite on about 25 children born in Wilmington. In this connection it may be said that Rabbi Faber, who has charge of the Hebrew congregation here, will hold special services in the synagogue, third story Lieberman Building, on Thanksgiving afternoon at 2 p. m., when he will preach a sermon from the first verse of the hundredth Psalm.[60]

Breidenbach was not a rabbi, but he was a teacher, *shochet,* ritual slaughterer, and *mohel,* ritual circumciser. In 1858, he was the first religious functionary of the new Adas Jeshurun Congregation in Philadelphia, and he conducted the services at the synagogue until a rabbi was hired.[61] At the time of this circumcision, he was a teacher at the Mikveh Israel congregation in Philadelphia, the oldest synagogue in the city.[62] What is most amazing is the number of circumcisions Breidenbach claimed to have performed. He must have traveled throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey to have amassed such a number. Since he did the circumcision " very quickly and dexterously " he must have been in demand. His figures may be suspect in terms of Wilmington since no " Bacheraf " was known in the city in 1855. The final added note in the article about Thanksgiving services demonstrated a broad acceptance of this American holiday even among the Jewish people.

[60] *Delaware State Journal,* Nov. 18, 1880. Dr. Simeon L. West had his office at 708 French Street. He began practicing in Wilmington in 1871.

[61] Marvin Shore and Charlotte Viner Bernstein (eds.), *Dedication Book Congregation Adath Jeshurun* (Philadelphia, 1967), 7.

[62] Henry Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1894), 110.

The following year, 1881, witnessed the beginning of a new development in the Jewish community. The assassination of the Czar of Russia and the subsequent pogroms against the Jews brought an influx of new immigrants to these shores. The Jewish community cared for all their brethren newly arrived in Wilmington from Russia. The proceeds of the second Montefiore Ball, as well as contributions from private individuals, were used to assist the 15 Jewish immigrant families who had recently arrived in Wilmington.[63]

These newcomers to the community settled in the same area of the city where the other Jewish families were living. The Wilmington city directories for the late 1870s and early 1880s clearly indicate that the majority of the Jewish people operated their businesses and lived on Market Street from Front up to Fifth Street. A few families did live on Front Street itself, but only Nathan Lieberman could afford to reside on the upper part of West Street in the seven hundred block. The Jewish people of Wilmington, even though they were mostly of German origin at this time, did not live near other German families in the city. Primarily they were anxious, as demonstrated by their residences, to be in the heart of the main business area of the city, which was the Market Street sector.[64]

While the influx of immigrants was one matter of concern, the purchase of a Jewish burial ground "was an over-riding need" enunciated as early as 1872.[65] Prior to the fourth Montefiore Ball in January, 1883, Jacob DeWolf, president of the Society, urged the membership to designate the funds raised at the Ball for the purchase of a cemetery. Unfortunately, the weather prevented many from attending the Ball at Webster's Dancing Academy in the Grand Opera House.[66] Nevertheless,

63 *Every Evening*, Jan. 24, Feb. 17, 1881. When the second article appeared in February, an ad ran on another page in the same paper announcing that J. P. Allmond, then mayor of Wilmington, was selling "Matzos–Passover Bread" in his store at Eighth and Market streets.

64 *Wilmington City Directory, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883*. In the Emile Topkis papers there is a compilation of the Jewish names found in these city directories. From this compilation made by Topkis, it is possible to determine the residential patterns of the Wilmington Jewish community in this period.

65 *Every Evening*, Nov. 5, 1872.

66 *Ibid.*, Jan. 18, 1883.

a $350 profit was realized, and the following month a piece of ground was purchased for this amount on Fifth Street between Hawley and Rodman.[67] The Montefiore Society had now accomplished its two major goals, the establishment of a synagogue and the acquisition of cemetery ground in the city.

The synagogue in those years had moved from the Lieberman Building to the Morrow Building at 211 Market Street. Our understanding of that period is enlarged by an interview with a resident of the city in those days. When questioned about the synagogue, Monroe Sondheimer, whose father Kaufman Sondheimer had a clothing store on Market Street, offered this fragmentary description:

> I knew the Synagogue above the Morrow Building on Market St. It was on the 2nd Floor—a small room, the Pulpit near the Front Windows. The prayerbook was in Hebrew. No part of the Service was in English. All of the men wore hats during the service. The women were separated from the men. The rabbi was named Faber. The service was Orthodox with no tendency toward Reform. The Sunday School teachers were Carrie and Ida Lieberman, daughters of Nathan Lieberman. I attended Sunday School at this Synagogue. My brother Ben was Bar Mitzvah there. Ten or twelve children attended the Sunday School....During the services in the Morrow Building most of the men wore *Talleisim.* Rabbi Faber wore a full beard. He was near-sighted, always held the Bible close to his eyes when reading....There were no pews in the synagogue over Morrow's store. Hard wooden benches were provided.[68]

This is the only personal record of that era which has been found.

[67] *New Castle County Recorder of Deeds* (Delaware) 12-232, February 13, 1883. The property for the cemetery was bought from Mr. & Mrs. William Bright. The property contained 587 square feet and had enough room for 150 graves. This cemetery was used until the beginning of the 20th century.

[68] These comments are taken from an interview with Monroe Sondheimer conducted by Emile Topkis on Oct. 14, 1955, in Philadelphia, Pa. Mr. Sondheimer was 79 at the time of this interview. He was the first Jewish graduate of Wilmington High School, completing his work there in 1894. Ida and Carrie Lieberman were both born in Wilmington; Ida on August 13, 1869, and Carrie on May 10, 1871. Ben Sondheimer was Bar Mitzvah in Wilmington sometime in the spring of 1876, and he was the first Jewish boy to achieve this religious milestone in the city.

With many more Eastern European Jews in Wilmington, the ritual of the Ohabe Shalom synagogue began to appear too liberal for a segment of the Jewish population. Therefore, under the leadership of Bernard Wolfson an attempt was made to found an Orthodox synagogue. The culmination of the efforts of this group led by Wolfson was the dedication of a new house of worship on Sunday, August 16, 1885. The reason for such a synagague was stated as follows:

> The new congregation is an offshoot from the one that was organized in this city some years ago. They adopted so many innovations and reform movements, that some of the stricter Israelites determined to organize for the perpetuation of the rigid forms of the ancient worship. One of the leaders of the movement says there is just as much difference between them as there is between Catholic and Protestant Christians.[69]

Since the founders of the first synagogue were of German origin, there is no doubt that it was more liberal than the newly arrived immigrants from Eastern Europe might have liked. Hence, to counteract this, emphasis on " the perpetuation of the rigid forms of ancient worship " was the fundamental goal of this new group.

The synagogue, located at 308 West Front Street, was decorated with evergreens, flowers, flags, and draperies. Since both Moses Montefiore and General Grant had recently died, their portraits were on display with black crepe around them. The Jewish community had grown considerably, and 200 people were present. On the Sunday of the dedication Hazzan Sabato Morais of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia and Rabbi Avigdor Caro of the House of Israel Congregation in Philadelphia spoke. Since it was not the Sabbath, a collection could be taken, and " liberal contributions " were given.[70] The

[69] *Every Evening*, Aug. 13, 1885. The leader quoted was either Bernard Wolfson, the president, or Aaron Harris, vice-president. Mr. Harris's daughter, Fannie, married Barnet Gluckman in 1887. Mr. Gluckman later became a magistrate, and he held the office from 1909 to 1934, longer than anyone else in Delaware history.

[70] *Every Evening*, Aug. 15, 1885. A complete report of the dedication is in a national Jewish newspaper printed monthly in New York, *The Jewish Messenger*, August, 1885.

new synagogue was called Adas Kodesch, the Congregation of Holiness. Four years later, in 1889, it was the first synagogue actually incorporated in Delaware.

Rabbi Morris Faber, in mourning for his wife Regina who died the same weekend that the new synagogue opened and concerned with this rival congregation, left Wilmington and the Ohabe Shalom Synagogue the day after Yom Kippur in September, 1885.[71] He went to New York to assume a pulpit there, but the following year he returned to Wilmington and continued to lead the Ohabe Shalom Synagogue for several more years. However, he had to supplement his income by being a tutor in foreign languages.[72]

Wilmington, though, was not the only city in Delaware in which Jews were to be found. Throughout the state there were other Jewish families in Smyrna, Dover, Milford, and Lewes; but the residents of these towns traveled to Wilmington or Baltimore for their religious needs. Unusual stories about Jews always caught the attention of the newspaper reporters. In particular one story in December, 1883, was entitled " How a Jewess Overhauled Her Runaway Husband." The article detailed a situation that had occurred in Dover. A young woman, Fanie Saponitz, " a blond Jewess," came down from Philadelphia to find her husband Lewis Saponitz, " a peddling Jew," who had left her and moved in with his father. When Fannie arrived in Dover, she filed a complaint with Magistrate Brown, and he promptly found and fined Lewis and sent him to jail. After being incarcerated for a few days, Lewis decided that he wanted to be reunited with his wife so he was released from prison by the magistrate.[73] Other than this newspaper story there is no further reference to the Saponitz family of Dover. What was surprising was Fannie's direct appeal for action to the magistrate. Usually arbitration of a family matter of this type was done in religious circles. However, in America this was not always the case, and adjudication in public courts became an accepted course of action. While the legal tactics of the " blond Jewess " were newsworthy, even

[71] *Ibid.*, Sept. 21, 1885.
[72] *Wilmington City Directory, 1886-1887.*
[73] *Every Evening*, Dec. 28, 1883.

more so was the dissolution of a Jewish family. This, we may assume, was the cause for the publication of this story. Yet, even in a human interest article such as this, we still cannot estimate the Jewish population in Delaware outside of Wilmington, or how their Jewish religious needs were served.

As we approach the period 1885 to 1889, let us focus, initially, on the general situation in the city before sketching the Jewish developments within it. The community of Wilmington was growing rapidly in the late 1880s, and the Board of Trade urged the merchants of the city to create incentives in their stores which would dissuade Wilmington customers from going to Philadelphia to purchase their goods.[74] In 1882, the Arnoux Electric Light Company introduced the Arnoux Hockhausen Lighting System to Wilmington, and Meyer Meyers, at Fifth and Market streets, was one of the first ten subscribers. When the Arnoux Hockhausen system did not work, the Edison system of incandescent lighting was introduced and began operating on January 1, 1886; Meyer Meyers was again one of the first ten subscribers.[75] Wilmington was a city on the ascent because of the influx of laborers who came to work in Wilmington's factories. Moreover, with this enlarged possible clientele, Jewish merchants had a tremendous opportunity to succeed. The wave of new Russian Jewish immigrants into Philadelphia brought a sizeable number to Wilmington as well. They came with a great burst of energy, with the desire to do well in their new country. Even language proved no barrier for them.

In 1887, the first rabbinic leader of stature moved to the community. He was Rabbi Hyman Rezits. He served the Adas Kodesch congregation from that year until his death in 1930. He came from Kovno, Lithuania, where he had been ordained as a rabbi at the Slobodka and Yeshiva, he was also a *shochet* and a *mohel*.[76] Under his leadership, the congregation

[74] Carol E. Hoffecker, *Wilmington Delaware* (Charlottesville, 1974), 111-112, 116-118; A. J. Clement, *Wilmington Delaware* (Wilmington, 1888), 5-8, 60-63.

[75] Thomas W. Wilson, "A History of Electric Service in Delaware," *Delaware: A History of the First State*, ed. H. Clay Reed (New York, 1947), 507.

[76] *The American Jewish Yearbook 5664* (1903-1904), 97. After training, a *shochet* received rabbinic sanction to act as a slaughterer of kosher meat. A *mohel* performed the ritual circumcisions on the eighth day after birth.

began to solidify. No longer was there any problem about kosher meat, no longer was there a problem of getting someone to circumcise baby boys. In addition to his other attributes Rabbi Rezits was a man of brilliant intellect, well-schooled in Talmudic discourse. Initially, his prime function was to keep the Orthodox Jewish community unified since it now made up the majority of the Jewish population. Unlike New York and Philadelphia where the German Jews dominated the community into the early twentieth century, in Wilmington by 1887-1888, the German Jews were in the minority.[77]

Rabbi Rezits, however, was unable, immediately, to suppress the several factions. In 1888 a second orthodox congregation was formed, probably named Ahavat Achim meaning "Brotherly Love." A local couple, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Cooper, whose children still live in Wilmington, brought their newly arrived Russian cousins, Rabbi Wolf Levine and his wife, to the city to take over the new congregation. Rabbi Levine came in April and left after the High Holidays. In a long article in the *Evening Journal* describing the observance of Rosh Hashanah in Wilmington in 1888, there is a reference to three different services being held in the city at Ohabe Shalom, Adas Kodesch, and another synagogue (probably Ahavat Achim).[78] It may be surmised that Rabbi Levine officiated at the Ahavat Achim congregation since Rabbi Faber officiated at Ohabe Shalom and Rabbi Rezits officiated at Adas Kodesch. Very shortly after Yom Kippur, however, Rabbi Levine left the city. Rabbi Rezits and Bernard Wolfson then started to arrange the merger of Adas Kodesch with the other orthodox congregation.

Congregation Ohabe Shalom, the congregation of the Montefiore Society, was also on the wane. Even though the Purim service in 1888 was described as a time "when the children drank and ate to their hearts content. . . .a joyous festival when the old folks will make merry," the congregation was gradually

[77] *Wilmington City Directory, 1888-1889.*

[78] *Evening Journal,* Sept. 5, 1888. In this article the reporter stated that about 400 people belonged to the three congregations. This figure may be a little exaggerated, but it is another indication of the continued growth of the Jewish community.

losing its identity as the Jewish population changed its complexion. To really see the change in the community, it is best to turn to the wedding in December, 1888, of David Topkis, the eldest son of Jacob Topkis. Rabbi Rezits officiated, and the entire story of the wedding was reported on the front page of the *Morning News*. In the list of guests present, only the Liebermans and the Abrahamsons can be identified from the German Jewish sector of the community. That prominent headline in 1888 read " The Marriage of Russian Poles," and the story was featured in the newspaper not only because of the uniqueness of the ceremony but also because of the rising number of Russian Poles in the community. These newcomers were now the dominant element.[79]

The year 1888 also marked an unusual milestone for a member of the Jewish community. Manuel Richenberger, who had married into the Sasse family, well-known in Wilmington society, managed the Sharpe Hotel at Front and Market streets. Aside from being the only Jewish member of the Fame Hose Company, a volunteer firefighting organization, as well as the manager of an amateur baseball team, The Quicksteps, Richenberger aspired to leadership in another sporting field.[80] On February 27, 1888, it was announced that Richenberger would give a fox hunt from his hotel the following Thursday morning. The turnout was very good, and the participants rode off to Richardson's Hill for the chase. However, their sporting desire had to be curtailed because of the 600 to 700 spectators who lined the area of the hunt.[81] Richenberger's hunt appeared to have been successful, since he sponsored others in later years. While the negative attitude of Judaism toward hunting did not seem to concern him, Richenberger was so Jewish-minded in other ways that when he was called to be a witness in a case, he declined to take the oath until he could put on his hat and *talit* and swear on a Hebrew Bible.[82]

By the summer of 1889, it was evident that incorporation proceedings would be in order for the Adas Kodesch synagogue.

[79] *Morning News,* Dec. 27, 1888. Mr. & Mrs. David Topkis were the parents of Emile Topkis.
[80] *Morning Herald,* May 5, 1876.
[81] *Every Evening,* Feb. 27, Mar. 6, 1888.
[82] *Delaware Gazette,* Nov. 20, 1868.

Just after the High Holidays the incorporation papers were filed, and a favorable reply was quickly given to this request by the State Legislature. Thus the Adas Kodesch Synagogue became the first incorporated Jewish house of worship in Delaware. In the following year, the Ahavat Achim group merged with Adas Kodesch. Meanwhile the Montefiore Synagogue, Ohabe Shalom, had become quite weak. Hence, the Jewish community had one main focal point, the Adas Kodesch Synagogue.[83]

The most telling evidence, though, of general Jewish prominence in the city can be best observed in the wedding story in October, 1889, of the marriage of Nathan Lieberman's second daughter Carrie to Harry Lipper in Philadelphia. Nathan Lieberman, now quite Americanized, wanted Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Philadelphia to officiate because he felt that at this ceremony there should be a modern Reform rabbi who spoke English, rather than a rabbi who only spoke in Yiddish. There were over 300 people present at the Mercantile Hall in Philadelphia, and after the wedding " a supper was served, which was said to be, by some of the Wilmington guests, one of the grandest they have ever been presented." Ex-Governor Pattison of Pennsylvania was present and spoke, as did Mayor Austin Harrington of Wilmington.[84] It was quite a gala event with the elite of the non-Jewish community in attendance. Such a tribute to Lieberman demonstrated that one segment of Wilmington Jewry had not only been accepted, but was already recognized for its influence in the general community.

The " formative " years had drawn to a close, and now with a synagogue and a rabbi, plus recognition by officials of the city, Wilmington Jewry was entering its adolescent years. The

[83] Barnet Gluckman (ed.), *Dedication Booklet Orthodox Adas Kodesch Congregation* (Wilmington, 1908), 23-27. In the incorporation document of Adas Kodesch, the word Jewish is omitted and only " religious organization " is mentioned. This was necessary because the Delaware law did not provide for the incorporation of a Jewish house of worship, only a Christian one. In the early twentieth century that law was changed. Between 1870 and 1890 the population of Wilmington doubled from 31,000 to 61,000. In that same period the Jewish presence in the city increased from twelve families to 103 families.

[84] *Evening Journal*, Sept. 24, 1889. Robert E. Pattison served as governor of Pennsylvania from 1883 to 1895. Austin Harrington was the mayor of Wilmington from 1888 to 1891.

mistakes and errors made during the immigrant years were now forgotten. With the dawning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Wilmington Jewry was about to enter a new era of extensive growth and development, leaving behind the period of gestation and birth, which had produced the building blocks for the future.

Author's Note:

The history of Delaware Jewry in the latter part of the nineteenth century has always been considered a closed area because there were no known sources. However, this incorrect assumption evolved because newspapers were not consulted. Because of the accessibility of all the nineteenth century Delaware newspapers in the Historical Society of Delaware, and because of the kind assistance of Mr. Dale Fields, the Executive Director of the Society, and his staff, this writer has been able to delve into the large amount of material which is actually available. Without the assistance of the Historical Society none of this research would have been possible. The extensive work done by Emile Topkis, the oldest living member of the Delaware Bar, was also made available to me and is now being catalogued as The Emile Topkis Papers. Two other people, Harry Bluestone and William P. Frank, have done pioneering work in Delaware Jewish history, and I have benefited from their counsel and advice. I want to thank Mrs. Hilda Codor and the late Lauren Dosick who read this paper in manuscript and offered suggestions. I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Robert Levinson, Associate Professor of History, San Jose State University, San Jose, California, who with his expertise in American Jewish history, made many valuable comments which greatly improved this paper. I am especially indebted to my secretary, Mrs. Milton Roffman, who carefully and patiently typed the entire work through its many versions.

The Jews of Scranton
1840-2000



Harry Weinberg: His Origins and Scranton Years

by Rabbi David Geffen, Ph.D.

Harry Weinberg was a brilliant businessman who saw value in investments where no one else could visualize worth. Among the best-known ventures of this nature were his purchase of the bonds and stock of the Scranton Transit Company, the Dallas Transit Company, the Honolulu Transit Company, and the Fifth Avenue Bus Company of New York, the largest private bus company in the United States in 1960. The profit he realized from each of these purchases was far more than he had paid for any of these transportation companies.

A resident of Scranton from 1955 to 1965, Harry Weinberg purchased $1.5 million of real estate during that time. His sense of what to buy, and when, was incredible. As an example, his acquisition of the Scranton Lace Corporation, which he and Irving Grossman ran successfully until 1978, was a company that had been in bankruptcy for five years. Mr. Weinberg realized its potential by financially linking it with the Hal Roach Studios, in which he had a major interest.

His later accomplishments in Hawaii were similar. Time and again, he transformed seemingly worthless land into properties with tremendous worth. Attorney Norman Harris characterized Harry Weinberg in this fashion: "For Harry to engage the financial giants and corporate elite of Hawaii . . . and to meet them in financial battle and to beat them was akin to the story of David and Goliath. The major foundation Weinberg created in his estate for the poor and needy grew out of Harry's major business confrontations."

Harry Weinberg was also a donor to local Jewish causes. The legend repeated by many and attested to by some of the older board members of the Jewish Home in Scranton is that he left money in cash every time he visited. In the early 1960s, when Mr. Weinberg held chairman positions for the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Federation fund-raising drive, he gave sizable donations to the Jewish community. In fact, in the 1963 campaign he raised his donation on three different occasions and flew in from Honolulu for a major function in New York where the Scranton Federation was honored.

His generosity toward The University of Scranton began in July 1960 when he and his wife, Jeanette, gave $5,500 "in cash," according to the press reports. University President Father Long commented, "Mr. Weinberg is a vigorous, wise and solid citizen. We have all felt his impact upon this community and I believe that he has injected a new confidence in this area. Mr. Weinberg, as a man of exceptional business ability, certainly has expressed his confidence in the future of this area by his investments in this community."

In making the gift Harry Weinberg said, "It is most encouraging to see a university rising so swiftly in this area. The university is developing the region's most valuable asset, youth, and in our opinion it is deserving of every one's support. Mrs. Weinberg and I can think of no better investment than to invest in the future of our young people. This will mean so much to this area and its future."

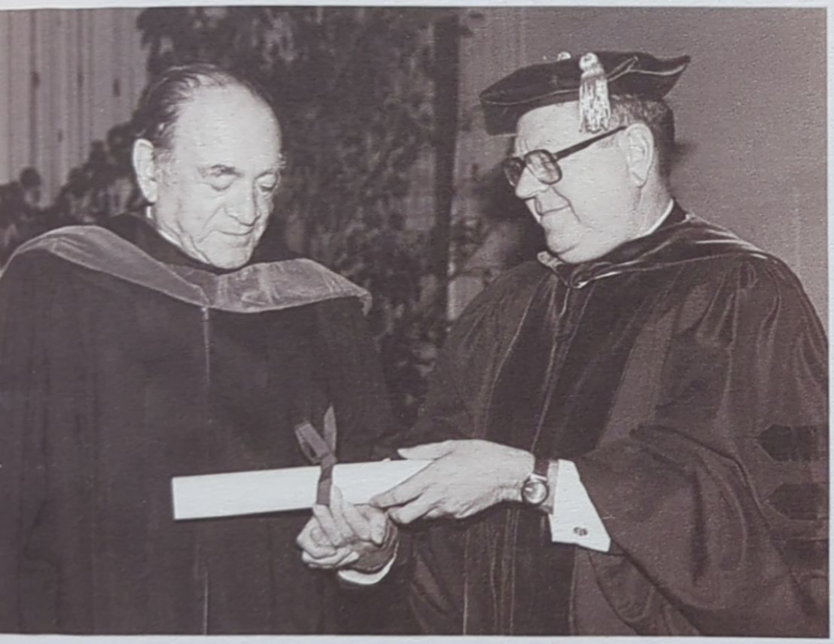
In the 1970s he continued to donate larger gifts to the University. In 1989, shortly before his death, he made a $6 million donation for a new library and for the creation of the Judaic Studies Institute.

Harry Weinberg was born on August 15, 1908, in Galicia, then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He lived there with his parents, two brothers, and a sister until he was four years old. His father immigrated to the United States in 1912, first to New York, then to Baltimore, before sending for his family to join him. The elder Mr. Weinberg opened an automobile body and fender shop near Camden Station, a business in which all five of the Weinberg children eventually labored and learned the rudiments of business.

A pugnacious youth given to daily fights with schoolmates, Harry was quickly consigned to a class for disciplinary problems, where he

remained for six years. He quit school after the sixth grade, went to work full-time at his father's shop, and sold newspapers to add to his income. Early in his career, he showed a talent for finding profit in businesses that others thought had little potential. After learning about the tire business from a friend in Philadelphia, he bought a mountain of used automobile tires before the United States entered World War II in 1941. He then turned a neat profit by recapping and selling them when tires became scarce. He also moved into real estate, modestly at first, when many Baltimore properties were selling for low prices during the Depression. He "never considered cash as something to put in a bank," observed Joseph X. Flannery in a 1963 profile of Mr. Weinberg in *The Baltimore Sun*.

Despite his lack of education, Mr. Weinberg amazed associates with his grasp of legal complexities and financial minutiae: "He wasn't an accountant, but he could read a 60-page analysis of a company's balance sheet and tell you what the accountants were trying to hide. And he wasn't a lawyer, but he could walk into a room of corporate lawyers and be eight steps ahead of them," said Shale D. Stiller, attorney for the Weinberg Foundation. Norman Harris, Harry Weinberg's attorney from 1955 to 1990, commented, "Whenever Harry had to solve a difficult tax problem, he did it by quoting the Bible. Harry's Bible was the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, which he read with a 6th grade education and understood almost instinctively."



In 1987, University of Scranton President J. A. Panuska, S.J. (right), presented Harry Weinberg with an honorary degree in recognition of his business achievements and generosity to charitable causes. Two years later, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation donated $6 million to the University; $5 million toward the construction of a new library and $1 million to the Judaic Studies Institute.

Harry Weinberg's business acumen and generosity were extended to family members. In 1946, just after World War II, Jeanette Weinberg was able to locate a number of her relatives who had survived the Holocaust. Norman Harris indicated that Harry brought 38 of these survivors over to the United States and set them up in business.

Already a millionaire by the end of World War II, Mr. Weinberg retired briefly in 1948 at the age of 40 but quickly became bored. That same year, he bought bonds in the Baltimore Transit Company, which operated the city's trolleys and buses, at bargain prices and later sold them at an enormous profit. It was the beginning of a series of transit company purchases that included lines in Scranton, Dallas, Honolulu, and New York.

He bought the companies at a time when privately owned transit lines were losing money. Unlike other investors, however, Mr. Weinberg recognized the hidden value of the real estate holdings that transit lines maintained. "He understood that there are a lot of corporations with sleeping assets, and those are good ones to invest in," his son Morton Weinberg said. "Only he used his own money rather than borrowing from other people or banks." Harry Weinberg also spotted trends long before anyone else detected them. After visiting Honolulu in the early 1950s, he recognized that jet travel would make Hawaii's tropical islands accessible to middle-class tourists, so he began to purchase property for hotels and malls.

The Scranton story began in 1955 when Harry Weinberg came to the city asking for receivership of the Scranton Transit Company, which had been on strike for 271 days. Two years earlier, he had begun to buy the company's bonds; by the time he appeared before Judge Hoban to be appointed receiver, he had acquired a controlling interest. The city opposed him vigorously, but after a few months Harry Weinberg was awarded the receivership of Scranton Transit.

His first act was to raise the hourly wages of the drivers from $1.50 to $1.80. They agreed to a three-year contract, the first ever in history. He

assumed that he could get an increase in the fare approved by the Public Utility Commission, from 15 cents to 17 cents. The increase was denied by the PUC, but by the end of the summer of 1955 the buses were running again.

Although the Scranton Transit Company never showed much profit in its operation, even after Harry Weinberg became president, what he really wanted more than the buses was the property. Between 1955 and 1960, in addition to increasing his real estate holdings in Scranton, he acquired the Dallas Transit Company and the Honolulu Transit Company.

In 1961 the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote a series of articles about him:

"These days when Harry Weinberg swaggers into the bar of the Hotel Casey at Scranton, Pa., for lunch, he always gets the big hello from the mixed bag of politicos, counselors, merchants, newspapermen and City Hall hangers-on who headquarter there.

"Who else you want to meet? he asked, introducing a visitor around recently. The Mayor?

"It wasn't always so: Five years ago when Harry Weinberg blew into town from Baltimore to put the finishing touches on his campaign to take over Scranton Transit Co., he couldn't get the time of day at the Casey. The editorialists were up in arms and the then Mayor John T. Hanlon contemptuously dismissed Harry Weinberg as a carpetbagger.

"Harry Weinberg has convinced the downtown merchants, who had a vital stake in the matter, that he saved Scranton Transit from bankruptcy. He has been generous with local charities and, much more important to the gang at the Casey, he has in the last five years personally bought something like $1.5 million worth of Scranton real estate.

"In a chronically depressed town like Scranton this is big money and Harry Weinberg's adventuring has apparently convinced other more timid capitalists that the city may have a future after all. It's surprising, says an attorney who bears Harry no affection, how much money has come out of hiding since Weinberg started throwing that wad of his around."



The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Memorial Library on The University of Scranton campus.

In the July 1960 issue of *Business Week* a lengthy article appeared about Harry Weinberg:

"Boss of three transit lines, Weinberg wants to win New York's giant Fifth Avenue Coach. He's the . . . Would-be King of Transit.

"At 51, Harry Weinberg is relatively new to the risky but potentially profitable business of collecting city transit companies. In a decade or so, he has made a small fortune investing in what he considers undervalued transit stocks. Up to now, however, he has won control of only three systems—in his home base at Scranton, in Honolulu, and in Dallas. Total revenues of the three come to only about $14 million a year.

"But the blunt-spoken and impulsive Weinberg is anything but a passive collector. What he wants is undisputed claim to being the top private transit operator in the nation. His cap is set for what he regards as the prize of them all: New York's

Fifth Avenue Coach Lines, Inc., which grosses $65 million a year, but finds it hard to make any sizable profits."

Business Week described what many people knew—that Harry Weinberg was quietly buying up the stock of the Fifth Avenue Transit Company of New York. Michael Quill, president of the Transport Workers Union, had the union buy a million dollars' worth of Fifth Avenue Bus stock to block Mr. Weinberg. Another major offer came from Roy O. Chalk, a leading figure in the transport industry, but that bid was not permitted to be acted upon by court order.

With the legal assistance of Roy Cohn, well known from the McCarthy hearings, Harry Weinberg ultimately gained control of the Fifth Avenue Bus Company. He announced his terms of operation, and within four days a strike occurred. On the following day, Mayor Robert Wagner had the city of New York take over the Fifth Avenue Bus Company. Within a year Harry divested himself of his stock, making a significant profit.

At the end of 1962, Harry Weinberg took on the responsibility of general chairman of the Scranton Federation Campaign. *The Argus,* newsletter of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, noted:

"Mr. Weinberg flew in from Honolulu, Hawaii, to attend the National UJA Conference as a member of its Resolution Committee. This honor, accorded only to top givers throughout the country, placed him among a group of 75 in closed sessions to hear a statement of relief needs and try to develop a resolution which would translate the purpose of the Conference into a goal for the 1963 National UJA."

At the kickoff meeting of the campaign in March 1963, Harry Weinberg explained that almost $35,000 a year needed to be raised to meet a commitment the Scranton Lackawanna Jewish Council made to assure the erection of the new Jewish Home for Eastern Pennsylvania.

The late Arthur Abrams, who as president of the Scranton Jewish Federation had invited Mr. Weinberg in 1961 to become the major gifts chairman of the drive, said, "Harry Weinberg was in a class by himself. Scranton has never had such a go-getter in our community and probably never will. The reason Harry succeeded," Mr. Abrams said, "is because there was no such thing as 'no' for him. When he went after something, he did not stop until he had acquired it."

The following story has become apocryphal and demonstrated Harry's concern for the elderly: One summer when Harry Weinberg and his accountant, Robert Kelly, Sr., went to Israel, they visited some of the public homes for the aged. Mr. Weinberg asked his guide why the buildings were so hot and stuffy and was informed that they were not air conditioned. After inquiring about the cost of installing air conditioning in all the public homes for the elderly in Israel, he wrote a check for a million dollars.

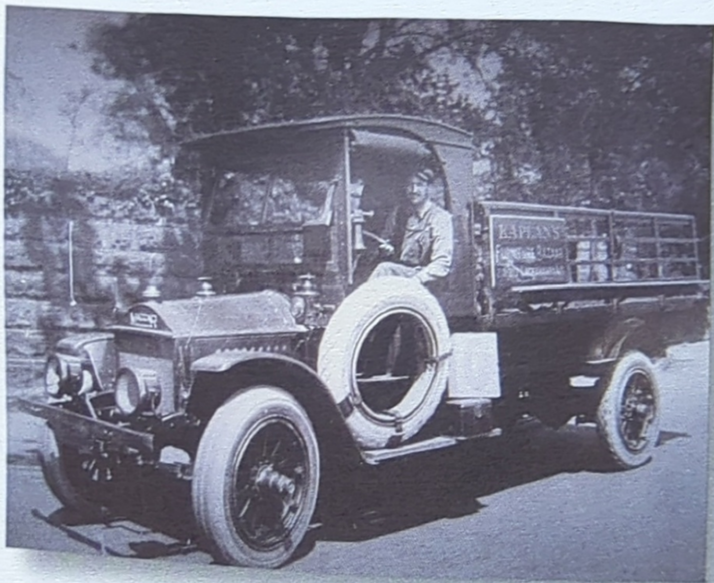
The Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation is the great legacy left by Harry Weinberg. His major interests focused on the elderly, the needy, and the poor. In its first five years, the Foundation made 162 gifts for the Jewish elderly in the amount of $93,500,000. In time every non-profit Jewish elderly facility in the United States will carry the name of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

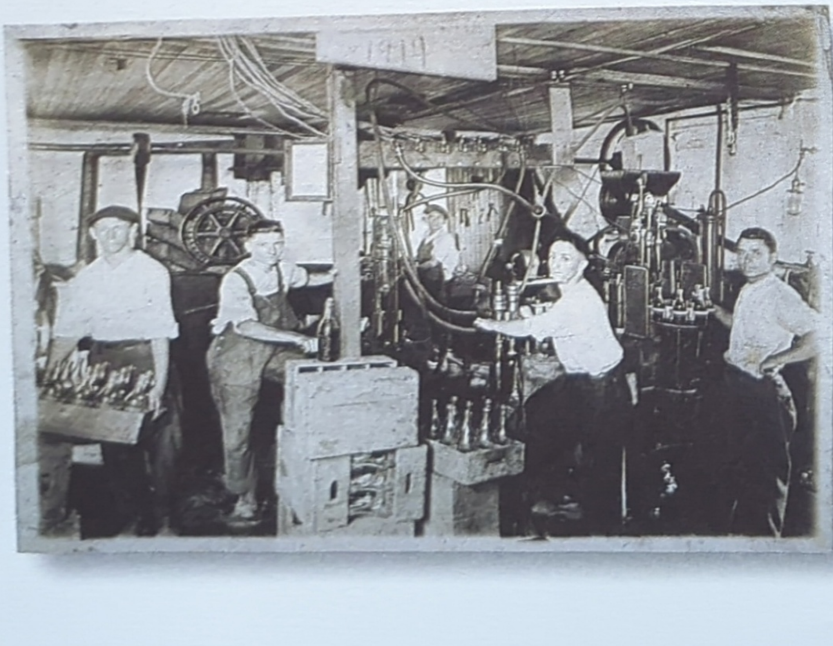
From Scranton to the world, Harry Weinberg has left his mark.



Cohen and Tuck. Photo, 1915. Courtesy of Helen Pinkus.
This business, located at 133 Penn Avenue, was also called Penn Clothing and Show Company. From left: Sam Newman, employee; Nathan Tuck, co-owner; Isadore (Specks) Cohen; Myer Cohen, co-owner; and Milton Cohen.

Kaplan's Furniture Bazaar Delivery Truck. Photo, c. 1924. Courtesy Margie Rosenberg.
Founded by Morris Kaplan in 1896, Kaplan's Furniture Bazaar was just one of many businesses in the bustling retail district that developed between Lackawanna, Spruce, Wyoming and Washington Avenues in turn-of-the-century Scranton. Although Kaplan's first location was 177 Penn Avenue, the business moved to 513 Lackawanna Avenue in 1903. In 1924, Louis and Max Kaplan (Morris's brothers) moved the business again to 211-213 Lackawanna Avenue, and finally, in 1969, to Route 6. Kaplan's Furniture closed its doors just shy of its 100th birthday.





Crystal Club Soda Bottling Plant. Photo, 1914. Courtesy of the Kahanowitz Family.
Crystal Club Soda, founded in 1907, has been owned and operated continuously by the Kahanowitz family. Far right: Harry Kahanowitz. Second from left: Steve Sauage.



M. L. Hodin Buying Produce from the Cohen Brothers. Photo, c. 1925. Courtesy of the Hodin Family.
M. L. Hodin was born in Austria-Hungary. After having served with the Austrian army in World War I, he made his way with his wife, Bluma, and son, Billy, to America. In 1923, the Hodins moved to Scranton and lived behind their Mt. Vernon Street store. From these modest beginnings, the first Giant Supermarket opened on Capouse Avenue in 1932 and eventually expanded to 22 stores in northeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. M. L.'s success in business was rivaled only by his service to the local community, as well as to Israel. At the age of 98, M.L. Hodin received the long overdue Military Service Cross of Honor from the Austrian ambassador to the United States. Hodin had been promised this medal for his heroics during World War I, but it had never been issued. Normally, this ceremony would have been held at the Austrian Embassy, but due to Mr. Hodin's age, the ambassador presented him with the medal in his Scranton home.



Working in the Textile Factories. Photo, c. 1960. Courtesy of Ed Brandes and Alperin Incorporated.
With a ready source of power and an abundant labor force, textile manufacturing thrived in northeastern Pennsylvania. However, toward the end of the twentieth century, competition from abroad seriously impacted and reduced the local industry.

Parents and children discover Jewish roots

How do assimilated Russian Jews react when their children become aliya activists? Rita Geffen, who recently visited the Soviet Union, describes how two families cope.

MY ROOTS go back to the White Russian town of Minsk. My maternal grandfather arrived in the "goldene medina" early in this century and after five years of work he was able to finance the trip for his wife and six children. My husband and I and our three children made aliya 12 years ago from America, and Israel is now our home.

A few weeks ago my husband David and I visited Kishinev, Kiev and Leningrad. As our plane entered Russian airspace my heart began to beat faster with the expectations and questions I had about our trip. What is happening to Jewish life in the Soviet Union? How is it affecting the different generations?

In our travels, we had an opportunity to compare our own past and present life with those of the Jews we met.

Our main contacts in Leningrad and Kiev were with two young men, Constantin, 22 and Boris, 25. They are the new generation of activists – bright, articulate, new to their Jewish heritage but magnets for other young adults. Constantin and Boris are "only children" who live with their parents.

Constantin is studying medical technology and Boris is a computer programmer. Both eventually want to make aliya, but not until they can leave a core of educated Jews in their respective cities. Through them we met others who attend their seminars and classes, where they learn Hebrew and study Jewish history, literature and traditions.

A few wear kippot and identify religiously with Judaism, but most are studying for cultural and national reasons. A few are considering aliya, but all want to leave the Soviet Union. Boris is a *ba'al teshuva* (newly observant Jew) and was circumcised last year. He keeps kosher and is unusual among his generation of Russian Jews.

Both young men come from materially comfortable and assimilated Jewish families. Their parents are in their late 40s or early 50s, an age similar to our own. This led us to identify with the parents and raised many comparisons with our own lives.

Boris' father served for many years in the Red Army in a responsible position and his mother is a teacher; Contantin's father is a physician and his mother is an engineer. Their apartments are amply furnished with modern appliances including two televisions, tape-decks and oriental carpets. As their sons have introduced Judaism into the home, mezuzot, books on Jewish topics, cassettes of Hebrew songs and souvenirs from Israel have been added to the decor.

Contantin and Boris speak a little Hebrew but we conversed with their parents in English and a sprinkling of Yiddish.

The parents expressed much pride and support for their sons' newly-found Judaism, and are happy that "they've found their place." They enjoy the bustling activity of the classes that take place in their homes, and are experienced hosts for the visitors who gravitate to them from Israel and other parts of the world. They are curious about life in Israel but are not ready to follow in the footsteps of their children.

Their new way of life, via their children, has not caused any distress to the parents. Neighbours have not, so far, complained to the authorities and their jobs are secure. The phone, however, is unplugged when classes or meetings take place. If, inadvertently, it is left plugged in and someone calls, everyone in the room keeps silent. On most such occasions, the caller hangs up without saying anything.

Constantin and Boris have felt some repercussions from their activism. Constantin's application for medical school was apparently rejected because of his activism. He is more discreet when asked for names and other details about the people who attend his classes.

Boris is well-known at the University of Kiev. Professors there threaten students with expulsion if they engage in "Zionist activity," or in any way associate with him. Boris himself expresses no concern, for there is "nothing illegal with what I'm doing." Judging from the presence of between 35 and 40 young adults in his living-room the night we were there, it seems his feeling is shared by others.

QUESTIONS ARISE. Our family is traditional, but what type of Jewish life, if any, would we be leading now if our grandparents had remained in Russia? How would we react, as parents, to *our* children's "Zionist activity"?

If we were to change places with the parents of Boris and Constantin, would we be fearful of the authorities? Would we support and encourage our sons as they have, knowing that it would eventually lead to physical separation? Our parents remain in the U.S. and have only recently, and reluctantly, come to terms with our decision to live in Israel.

How would we deal with a *ba'al teshuva* in our midst who demands radical changes in our life-style? How do our *own* parents feel about *our* physical separation from them, with their grandchildren 6,000 miles away?

Would Constantin's and Boris' assimilated parents behave differently if they lived in America? Does living under totalitarian rule make parents more understanding and tolerant – or more fearful – of their child's independent decisions?

NOT EVERYONE lives in comfortable material conditions. In Kishinev we spent an evening with Igor, 65, a widower with a married son and family in Israel. His small apartment is shabbily furnished but filled with Jewish objects and books. He is an engineer, speaks Yiddish competently, and is Jewishly knowledgeable even though he lived through Stalin's reign. His son was in Moscow at the time attending a seminar for Jewish activists.

Igor received us very graciously and tears of emotion welled up in his eyes when we gave him a *magen david* from Jerusalem. Igor feels that the Soviet government is more lenient now, but anti-Semitism remains strong among the people. He is very proud of his son and daughter-in-law, who teach Hebrew, and mentions that even his young granddaughters speak a few words. His face lights up when he describes the six circumcisions performed by a Jewish surgeon, and the five Jewish weddings "with a rabbi and huppa" that took place in Kishinev during the past year.

"Purim and Hanuka bring large crowds of young families together, usually at my son's apartment. There could be a hundred or more people for a *Purimspiel.* These are holidays for the children. Pessah seders are not attended by many people, since they don't know the meaning of the holiday."

He is quite concerned about the future generations of Jews. "Studying on a regular basis requires a strong desire and can be risky, and so very few are left here to do it. The best have already left Kishinev, most for Israel."

Igor's activist son and family would like to make aliya but cannot do so. His daughter-in-law's family opposes the move and is taking advantage of the "poor relations" clause in Soviet emigration regulations, which require emigrants to get releases from relatives. Her parents claim to need financial support from their daughter. Igor's son is not willing to make aliya without his wife.

SOME FAMILIES who want to leave, however, are willing to separate for what they hope is a temporary period.



This greeting for a healthy and happy New Year, prepared by *Jerusalem Post* cartoonist Ya'acov Kirschen, was distributed by Rita and David Geffen to Jews they met on their recent trip to the Soviet Union.

Michael and Margarita are in their late 30s, and have been refuseniks for 15 years. When he applied to leave, Michael lost his job as a scientist at an atomic energy plant, and they moved to a small town to be with Margarita's parents. Subsequently her parents died and the couple now has three young daughters.

They have wanted to move back to a larger city, since Michael suffers from ill health and they feel isolated Jewishly in their present environment. The authorities have not permitted them to move.

"There is no hope for the future for Jews here," Michael told us. "There are no leaders, and we are alone in our efforts to maintain a Jewish home and fight for our rights to move to Israel. We demonstrate and the other Jews are fearful. They stand on the sidelines and watch."

We were happy to learn that Margarita and her daughters were granted permission to make aliya and will arrive here soon. Michael's security clearance is not complete, after 15 years, and he also is suffering from the "poor relations" clause.

"My step-mother is crazy. She just wants to make trouble and doesn't care about me personally. She wants 3,000 rubles, an impossible sum. If I give it to her she'll just ask for more." Michael, however, is hopeful. His main concern is that there is no one in town to whom he can leave his Jewish books when and if he finally receives permission to leave. He is forbidden to take them with him.

Until then, Michael will continue his petty jobs of shovelling snow, stoking coal, or sorting mail in the local post office. He does keep up with his scientific profession through occasional private tutoring. The years have hardened him. A truck stood outside his humble cottage while we visited. In all probability "they are recording our conversation but it doesn't matter. My neighbour is a Jew and works for the KGB but so what..."

IN GENERAL, the desire to learn is evident among younger people, while religious practice is perpetuated by the elderly. Shabbat morning services in the three cities, each of which has one synagogue, are attended mainly by men in their 60's and 70's.

In Kishinev there are two minyanim and attendance can be as high as 200 people. Moldavia, where Kishinev is located, was formerly part of Romania, and Hebrew schools abounded until the area fell under Communist rule during World War II. The congregants were delighted to exhibit the Hebrew they remembered from the "old days," and took advantage of the rare occasion to converse with guests from Israel.

Young adults are not familiar with religious practice, but were interested in obtaining religious texts such as the Bible and prayer books with Russian-Hebrew translation. However, they prefer to get them from a friend or from a source other than the synagogue.

We did see an exception to this, in Leningrad. There we met a young man in synagogue who attends services regularly, because of his interest in *hazzanut* (cantorial music). He readily accepted a Hebrew prayer book and Bible from us, but he prefers to study alone in his home with a dictionary. He does not attend classes for "there are KGB agents among the students."

The synagogue is used by all generations as a means of Jewish identification. In Leningrad on Simhat Tora, two to three thousand people converge, and teachers of Hebrew display signs advertising their classes. Young people use this annual occasion to enroll for lessons.

From our very limited perspective, we did see a determination among many Soviet Jews to learn about all aspects of their heritage. There are many obstacles to their progress and they need constant support and materials from the Jews of the west.

The Russian media presents distorted images of life in Israel, claiming for example that "wars have caused a lack of young men of marriageable age." However, we were beseiged by intelligent questions about the prospects for peace, the dependence of Israel on America, problems between Ashkenazim and Sephardim and between the religious and non-religious, capitalism vs. socialism in our economy, and many questions about the weather.

Very few Russians make aliya and there is a need to improve conditions here to attract more immigrants. Some of their bias against Israel is based on reports they receive from their friends who came here.

As American Jews who willingly chose Israel as our home, we sought to present its many good aspects, but the road is stony and uphill. Russians may want to leave their country but very few are as idealistic as we are about the country they want to move to. One activist told us that "Australia is my dream of dreams." We left with the hope that as Russian Jews continue to study and deepen their Jewish roots, Israel will become a homeland for them as it is for us.

The writer is a psychologist who lives in Jerusalem.



AT LEAST the author has a bird that comes to visit. (Reuters)

Quarantine as a reminder

• By DAVID GEFFEN

I am very fortunate that a bird comes to visit almost every day. He moves around on the ledge of the window next to my room where my bed and my computer are found. He begins to "speak" to me, tweeting away. He looks at me and I look at him. I begin to make some strange sounds, learned when I was taking the "Bird Study" merit badge.

He cocks his head; looks at me with his piercing eyes. Seems he understands.

I keep making the sounds. He grows tired of my efforts so he starts to "sing." Then he soars away. I am distraught, but I always feel that he will return. He is my friend.

Quarantine for me is very hard to take. When I was about 10, I caught the measles, and I was put in quarantine at home and not permitted to go to school. My parents both worked, so I was alone. My grandparents, who lived three blocks away, were not permitted to visit me.

Atlanta, where I lived, was filled with measles so quarantine for those who had it was essential. Since I was in Hebrew school, I did have a siddur, but I was not into praying that much. Once in a while the "Shema" or the "Amidah." The most fun, from the front window of our apartment, was looking out and seeing the automobiles. I counted them for about a half an hour each time: mostly Fords, Plymouths, Dodges and Studebakers.

Each one massive. Rarely a Cadillac, the most expensive car then. Every so often, the Washington Street streetcar would come by. Our apartment was on Washington Street southeast, a street straight in both directions. You could see up to Georgia Avenue, which was a main intersection.

That crossing was difficult for me to observe, because a few stores up on the commercial Georgia Avenue was the Manhattan Kosher Bakery. There I bought seedless rye, pumpernickel and challa. Of course, the baker, Mr. Novack, my friend, gave me a few cookies, what a treat.

My real outlet was the radio. I had never really listened to the radio much – of course no TV. I had listened to the famous Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott fight. A surprise Walcott victory.

When I was living in Delaware before aliyah, I was the clergy selected to give a Memorial Day prayer at the Delaware Memorial Bridge. I saw that on the program Arnold Cream, county supervisor, was there. As I stood there, all of a sudden a mountain of a man walked up – I gasped it was Jersey Joe Walcott, the name he fought under. I had never seen someone so large and muscular in my life. I shook his hand and said quietly – I heard on the radio how you beat Ezzard Charles. He smiled. He knew I was a fan.

Lastly on the radio was the commercial "Queen of Wheat is so good to eat – we have it every day." Wouldn't you know my mother gave me Queen of Wheat each morning before school. That commercial bored into my mind so much that until this day, it is very difficult for me to eat and swallow oatmeal of any kind.

The Lone Ranger was my afternoon serial on the radio. "Hi Ho Silver Away" and the heels of the horse could be heard distinctly on the radio. Lastly, the program I was not supposed to hear, Stella Dallas. That was real life, relationships between men and women, I was told not to listen to it.

So quarantine here in this eternal city brings back many memories. There I was spotted by the measles, which after a certain amount of time began to fade away. Done with disease, I was free. Here the coronavirus reminds us of the plagues of old – they were severe but then they were over. Our plague has no end in sight so we will be quarantined for a long time.

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The Jerusalem Post (1950-2008); Oct 27, 1991; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Jerusalem Post
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ATLANTA THEN & NOW

When Atlanta Stadium was Jewish

DAVID GEFFEN

ATLANTA-FULTON County Stadium was built where once there thrived the Jewish community of Washington Street. There in the big and little shuls, Ahavath Achim and Shearith Israel – former edifices on the stadium site – I learned alef-bet, gemara and davening. But before and after my lessons I played ball behind the little shul.

Long before Glavine, Avery and Smoltz pitched shutouts, Aaron and Gant hit homers, Nixon stole bases and Pendelton won the batting championship, countless Jewish youngsters starred on their own shul turf. Today those Washington Street institutions are memories. The bima, arks and beit midrash have been replaced by stands, scoreboard and stadium green.

The Jews began to move to Washington Street before, during and just after WW I. The first synagogue there was Ahavath Achim, dedicated in 1921 at 346 Washington just a few blocks away from the State Capitol and what was then Hunter Street, a Jewish enclave, and is today Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

By the end of the 1920s, the Shearith Israel synagogue, where my grandfather, Rabbi Tovias Geffen was rabbi for sixty years, was built at 500 Washington Street. It seemed that the yard behind the shul was especially left empty for the budding superstars.

Returning with my parents to Atlanta just after WW II, I was eager to break into the local shul/sports world. Every afternoon for several weeks my father and I played catch, he barehanded and I with his old glove.

That relic of my father's youth was a pre-WW I mitt which was too small and also made for a southpaw which my father was and I wasn't. Finally, my father said that I was ready to play "behind the shul." He was a little too optimistic about my talents, but pretty soon I broke into one of the starting lineups.

I'll never forget when someone showed up with Country Brown, the best basestealer of the Atlanta Crackers, our AA minor league club. While the rabbi and teachers watched, he gave us instructions how to do a hookslide. A lot of pants were ripped and knees bloodied on the rough ground, but none of us cared since we'd been "shown by a pro."

Make no mistake, the Atlanta Crackers made the the city famous since it won the most minor league pennants in the U.S.

My fondest memory of the stadium came in the early 1960s. One day after taking my grandfather to an appointment in downtown Atlanta, he asked me if we could ride around the stadium which was still fairly new.

When we arrived, the memories became overpowering and grandfather and I snuck in.

That evening after dinner, my father and grandfather discussed our snooping about on the hallowed turf. My grandfather, who had a very good sense of Atlanta geography, described precisely where in the stadium the shuls would have been located, where the stores and homes of various people could be found. And then he told my father definitively, "our house was on base number three."

REBECCA AFFACHINER

Leader of Jewish charities and communal services who devoted herself to the welfare of Jews throughout the world.

Rebecca Affachiner was born in Poland in 1884, and came to America with her family in 1891, growing up on New York's Lower East Side. She was the first woman to graduate from the Jewish Theological Seminary as an educator for Jewish girls, and spent a decade-long career in education. She then became involved in social work, serving as the first female chaplain in a state institution, the New York State Training School in Hudson.

During World War I, she volunteered for the Jewish Welfare Board and served in the first women's unit sent to France. There, she worked with Jewish soldiers and arranged special celebrations, including a Seder for 350.



Ezra Gorodesky presents the flag to former Ben-Gurion President Rivka Carmi, 2011
Courtesy of Dani Machlis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



World War I French Service Medal
Originally owned by Rebecca G. Affachiner
Gift of Ezra P. Gorodesky, CHS Collection 2005.49.3
Courtesy of the Connecticut Historical Society

INNOVATION

As enemy fire shook her neighborhood, Rebecca was trapped in her apartment. Sensing an imminent historical moment, she cut up a bedsheet to sew a flag featuring a six-pointed star and stripes, creating the blue color using a crayon. On Friday, May 14th, after hearing Ben-Gurion proclaim the creation of the new State of Israel, she raised the flag on her porch in Jerusalem, becoming the first person to display this enduring symbol of the birth of the nation.

GRIT

At the end of WWI, Rebecca moved to Hartford — she became Superintendent of the United change to Jewish Charities, was involved in the Connecticut State School for the Blind and helped establish Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters chapters in both Hartford and New York City. On a 1926 trip to Palestine and Egypt, she was named the first National Field Secretary of Hadassah.

She continued her charitable efforts across the US until 1934 when at age 50, Rebecca moved to Palestine to better devote herself to the welfare of Jews throughout the world, creating the Palestine Society for Crippled Children. As Israel's War of Independence began in 1948, an American consular official urged her to leave. She refused.

LEGACY

Rebecca was known as the "Betsy Ross of Israel." Her knowledge and Jewish spirit were evident in her eagerness to do her duty in a pleasing and sympathetic manner. The flag stayed in Rebecca's possession until her death in 1966. Her friend and caretaker Ezra Gorodesky later donated it to the archive at Ben-Gurion University in Jerusalem.

> It was my personal way of welcoming Israel into existence.

> "I have waited my entire lifetime to see the rebirth of the Jewish State, I do not intend to miss it.